

The BIBLE STORY

OLD & NEW TESTAMENT
by WILLIAM CANTON





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THE BIBLE STORY



Then came Jesus and stood in the midst.

THE BIBLE STORY

BY

WILLIAM CANTON

AUTHOR OF

“THE BIBLE AND THE ANGLO-SAXON PEOPLE,” “W.V. HER BOOK,”

“A CHILD’S BOOK OF WARRIORS,” “THE STORY

OF ST. ELIZABETH,” ETC.

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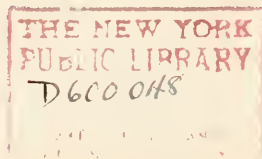
NEW YORK AND LONDON

1915

Sed imbecilla pluma est velle
Sine subsidio Tuo.—BÆDA.

The wish, unless with Thee to aid,
Is but a foolish feather.

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DAY-DREAMS OF NAZARETH

(TO ANIMULA, "GUEST AND COMRADE")

THERE was no place, not even the Sea of Galilee, that you were so much taken up with as Nazareth. Do you remember how we used to talk about it, and you would lie back in the warm grass, shut your eyes, and say you could almost see it?

There was the sunny valley, like a great green crater among the hills; with fields of barley and wheat and of millet which grew as high as a tall man; with gardens of citrons and pomegranates, and slopes of silvery grass full of Easter daisies, red anemones, and the rosy flowers of wild flax. High up on the hill-side, Nazareth—a white village of stone houses with flat roofs. It was roughly fenced round with rocks and ashy-blue cactus and prickly pear; and within it and near it were old olive-trees, tamarisks and broom bushes, where brightly coloured birds were darting to and fro. Many rounded hill-tops, covered with vines, acacias and olives, surrounded the valley, so that you could see nothing of the outside country unless you went up to the hill-tops.

And there was the little Child. Fair and ruddy we thought He must be, like His ancestor David the King; about four and a half years old when He was brought to Nazareth; and His memory would be thronged with the sights and the wonders of Egypt.

In Egypt, where He saw the huge stone images of dead kings and the gorgeous temples of bird-headed and beast-headed gods, His mother had taught Him to say the first words learned by a Jewish child :

“The Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.”

And among the stories which Jewish mothers told their children,

we thought she must already have told Him of the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil; of the sorrows of Israel in the house of bondage, of Pharaoh of the hard heart and the dark angel passing over in the night with his naked sword, of the flight through the sea and of the voice of God in the clouds and lightnings on Sinai.

As He grew older, in Nazareth, she would also read to Him from a roll of the scriptures, and repeat verses to Him until He could say them by heart. You thought that perhaps, like other little boys, He might have made Himself a book with rollers to roll up properly and a scarlet thread to tie it together.

We were sure that Jerusalem with its shining white Temple on the hills was one of His day-dreams; for three times a year all the village was astir with pilgrims going up to the feasts in the Holy City. When they set out a piper went before them playing on his pipe, and girls with tambourines followed him, dancing and singing,

“ Glad am I when they say to me,
Let us go up to the house of the Lord.”

And we fancied His mother would be sure to take Him up to the hill-tops, from which they could watch the pilgrims crossing the plain of Esdraelon.

Then the Child would look abroad into the greatness of the earth; see the mighty tracts of corn, with little towns and clusters of palm-trees rising out of it like islands; see travellers or soldiers or the camel trains of the merchants coming up from the sea or going down to it by the great road between the wooded gorge of Jordan and the rocky heights of Carmel; see the deep blue waters of the Great Sea itself and the white specks of the ships of Tarshish.

We liked to picture Him growing tall and beautiful like any earthly child, going to the quaint little synagogue school where the master sat behind his scholars, and playing at the common games with His school-fellows. Then when He was a little older, it seemed to us that when He was not reading the sacred books, it was His delight to wander alone on the hill-tops and to sit and watch things, drinking in the lore of the seasons, and the loveliness of grass and rock and tree, and the vision of the

mountains and of the clouds of heaven. That was not strange, for we knew that among children there is often a shining clearness of sight which gives to all they look at the brightness of the morning, and which seems indeed to enable them to see sometimes what is invisible to us who are grown up. That we call clairvoyance.

And we knew He was fond of all manner of creatures—from the hen covering the brood under her wings to the tired lamb which the shepherd carried over the veld (for true fields there were none) and the sheep which went to him when he called “Long-ears” or “White-nose.” But the strange thing was the curious shy way in which all the wild creatures appeared to know Him and were attracted to Him. It made us think of Adam in paradise, and we said, “It is because He is an innocent and sinless child”; for though we cannot tell how different we should be, and what strange powers we should have, if we had always been perfectly sinless, we remembered the wonderful stories of the saints and the wild creatures.

And do you recollect how one little thing, which we had overlooked, made many things clear to us? For quite suddenly we discovered that there was a beginning before the beginning in which “God created the heaven and the earth.” The Bible begins really not with Genesis but with St. John. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” And this little Child, which His mother “saw with her eyes, which she had looked upon, and which her hands had handled” was the Lord of life. “All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made,” in heaven or on earth, visible or invisible. It was this Child “whose right hand first strewed the snow on Lebanon, and smoothed the slopes of Calvary.”

So it came to us to imagine to ourselves how, in those years of awakening in Nazareth, He, seeing through human eyes the strange, the beautiful, the mighty, and the terrible creatures of His making, may have been drawn by shadowy recollections and dim love to recognize them, and to *unforget* “the glories He himself had known.” And as a sunset, a tune, a fragrance, a face, a word brings back to old people things they had long ceased to recall, so the vision of rocks and waters, of starlight and the

colours of evening and of morning, and the affection of the wild creatures may have awakened Him to at least some vague consciousness of His divine self.

But it was from the reading of the scriptures, we thought, that the full revelation surely came to Him. The "promise of the rainbow" brought for ever into His life the living things in the lands and forests of the world—the young lions which sought their meat from Him, the wild asses whose thirst He quenched, the ravens which cried to Him when they went hungry, the mother bird which it was forbidden to take with its eggs or its brood; for all were included in that divine covenant,

"I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for token of a covenant between me and the earth; and I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth."

And what an illumination, it seemed to us, shone from His ancient dealings with His own people. It was He who appeared to Abraham in the plain of Moreh, and again in Mamre when he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day, and He who stayed his hand when Isaac lay bound on the altar upon the mountain. It was He who wrestled with Jacob at the ford of Jabbok until the breaking of the day. It was He who spoke to Moses from the burning bush on Horeb; He who went before the tribes of Israel into the land flowing with milk and honey; He who came in arms, the captain of the host of the Lord, and gave Joshua the overthrow of Jericho.

At what time He became aware that the birds of the leper and the goats of the atonement were foreshadows of Himself, when He first knew that "all things must be fulfilled which were written of Him in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms" are among the mysteries of His life. But we remembered how, when He was but twelve years old, the rabbis in the Temple gazed in wonder and delight at His shining intelligence, and we thought that even then perhaps He saw with clairvoyant eyes and read the souls of men, and lived in two worlds with the strange powers of sinlessness, so that the miracles of the spirit were as natural to Him as the things of the senses are to us.

These were our day-dreams, yours and mine, of those years at Nazareth, whereof nothing has been told us. And to give you some idea of time, I said that in the days of His youth there was born, perchance on the wooded hill at Colchester, a little girl, who came to be a famous warrior-queen. "Oh, I can guess," you cried, "Boadicea! Isn't it quite lovely to know that she might have seen Him? Doesn't it bring them together? And just think!

' When the British warrior-queen,
Bleeding from the Roman rods '—

they both bled from those Roman rods."

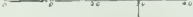
Now that I have here the whole Bible Story, told for you very briefly and straight on to the end, I remind you of these things, because I want you to think of them when you read this book. And I want you to love it, because much of it is the story which He read at Nazareth, which perhaps began to reveal Him to Himself, and which He knew word for word. The rest is the story of His own life on earth, and of what happened afterwards. The whole of it will reveal Him to us, and in it we too shall see ourselves.

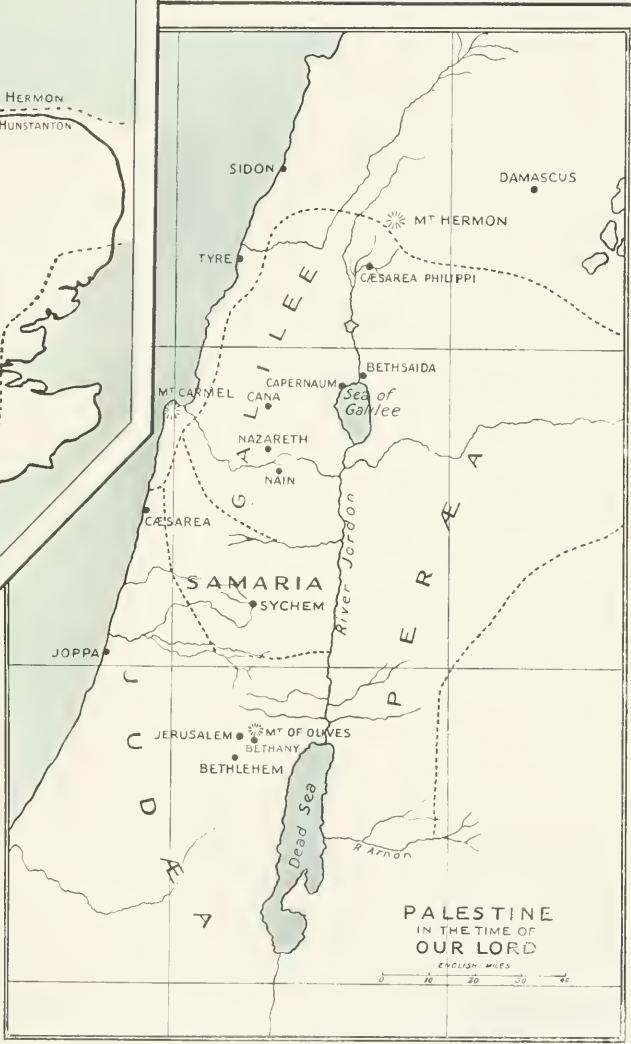
Come back, dear guest and comrade, come back soon, when the grass is warm and the apples are red and yellow on the tree.

Good Friday, 1915.

CANAAN
DIVIDED AMONG
THE TRIBES

ENGLISH MILES





PALESTINE
IN THE TIME OF
OUR LORD
ENGLISH MILES



1. THE DAYS OF GOD.

IN the beginning God created heaven and earth.

The earth was yet waste and without form, in a horror of darkness and seething waters, when the Spirit of God moved over the abyss. God called forth Light, and the creature of light came; and out of the light He made day, and out of the darkness night; and there was evening and there was morning, and this was the first day. But it was not such a day as these mortal days of ours, for with God one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years with Him are as one day.

On the second day He made the immeasurable clear spaces of heaven, for the way of the clouds which come up from the waters and for the sojourn of the snow and rain.

On the third day God drew the seas together, and gave them their abiding-place and their limits. And His hands formed the dry land, and shaped the wild imagery of the ancient mountains and the precious things of the lasting hills. And at His word the earth clothed itself with the grasses of the fields and the grasses of rice and corn and with irises and reeds of the waters; bitter herbs and herbs of mint and thyme and marjoram sprang up on the hills; fruit-trees broke into blossom of apple and citron, pomegranate and almond, and the tall trees of the world locked their roots about the rocks and cast abroad their branches.

Then God set lights in heaven to mark the times and the seasons. Two great lights He made to illumine the earth, the greater by day and the lesser by night. The stars in their height He made also. And there was evening, and the first sunset. The mountains glowed

in its beauty; and over against them in heaven the clouds mirrored them in a vision of glory and mystery. And there was morning, and the first sunrise. Between the evening and the morning the moon shone, and a mist rose up from the warm earth and watered the grasses and herbs, the fruit-trees and the great trees of God. This was the fourth day.

On the fifth day God bade the waters teem with life. He created the sea-monsters, leviathan and behemoth, the great serpents of the deep, and all the shoals that swim in the tides of ocean. All the birds He made that range in the clear heaven, albatross who sleeps in the clouds, and every flying creature. All of them He blessed, and bade them fill sea and sky with their young.

On the sixth day He called forth from the earth the creatures of its bearing, the mighty beasts of the earth, mammoth and mastodon, the swift creatures of the forest, all manner of cattle, and all the swarms of creeping things. To these and to the birds of the air He gave every green herb for food.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Out of the dust of the red earth He made him after His own image. He breathed into his nostrils the breath of being, and man became a living soul; and God gave him the lordship of all living things in earth and sea and sky.

The heavens and the earth were finished. God saw that all the works of His hands were very good. On the seventh day He rested, and He blessed that day and made it holy.

2. THE RED DUST.

THE Lord God planted a garden in Delightful Land, towards the sunrise. Around it He raised a green earthwork. He overshadowed its hills with the boughs of the plane-trees, and its high hills with the glory of the cedars. In its glades He grew every tree

of beauty and goodly fruit; and He set in the midst of it the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil. A river out of Delightful Land, which is Eden, watered the garden, and went forth from it, flowing in four great rivers.

God took the living soul into which He had breathed His own similitude, and placed him in the garden to tend it; and He called his name "Man," which is to say, creature of Adam, the red dust. He gave him for food every plant and herb, the fruit of the Tree of Life, so that he should never know the distress of age nor the sorrow of death, and the fruit of every tree in the garden, except that of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil. "Of that," said the Lord God, "thou shalt not eat; in the day of thy eating it thou shalt die."

God brought before Adam the great beasts, the cattle, the birds of the air, and all the wild creatures over which He had given him lordship, and Man gave them their names, but among them there was none like himself to be his companion. Then God said, "It is not good that the Red Dust should be alone"; and He cast the Man into a deep sleep. He took from his side a rib, and fashioned it into a helper like himself, and led her to him. And Adam, awakening from the deep sleep, beheld her and cried, "O bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh!" and he called her "Ishsha," my Woman, because she had been taken out of Ish, her Man.*

In the undying youth and beauty which the touch of God's hands had left upon them, and in the delight of His hands, they dwelt in Paradise; the beasts and birds and all creatures of their lordship were glad of them; and the trees of the garden and the cedars on the high hills laughed out for joy.

* The oldest form of the word *woman* was *wifman*, a wife-man, and in those days the word *man* meant either man or woman.

3. THE BEGUILER.

Now the serpent was the most subtle of all the beasts which God had made, and the spirit of evil entered into him, and he spoke to the woman. "Has God indeed told you that you shall not eat of every tree in the garden?" "We may eat of the fruit of the trees," the woman answered; "but of a tree which is in the midst of the garden God has said we shall not eat—nay, nor touch it—or we shall die." "You will not die," said the serpent; "but God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened; and you will become like God, knowing good and evil."

Then the woman called to Adam, and she led him to the tree, and they gazed upon it. She saw that it was good for food; her eyes longed for it; it was a tree to be desired if one would be wise. She plucked fruit from its branches and ate, and she gave thereof to the man, and he too ate. And at once the eyes of both of them were opened; they knew that they were naked, and in fear and shame they wove leaves of the fig-tree together and made themselves girdles.

In the cool of the evening they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in Paradise, and hid themselves from Him among the trees. And God called to the man, "Where art thou?" Adam came trembling, and answered, "I heard the sound of Thee in the garden and was afraid, for I am naked, and I hid myself." "Who has taught thee that thou art naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree which I have forbidden thee?" The man said, "The woman Thou didst make me for a companion gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." God said to the woman, "Why hast thou done this?" And the woman replied, "The serpent beguiled me."

Then the Lord God laid His curse upon the serpent: "For evermore shalt thou eat the dust of loathing. I will put everlasting enmity between thee and the woman. Her offspring shall bruise thy head, and

thou shalt bruise his heel." Upon the woman He laid sorrow and travail: "Thy children shall be born in thy pain; thy man shall be thy master, and his will shall be over thy desire." And because of Adam's disobedience He cursed the ground, so that it should bring forth thorns and thistles, and make the man's toil for food a grievous thing until he returned into the dust from which he was taken.

God made garments of skin for the man and woman, and drove them out into the solitudes. On the eastern side of Paradise He stationed the great-winged cherubim and a living sword of flame on every side whirling, "lest the man, who has become one of us," said the Lord, "should take of the Tree of Life and eat and live for ever."

They went out from God's presence into the low lights of the gloaming, and sought for shelter. All through the night they watched in dismay the moving shapes of the cherubim and the fiery sword turning every way in the darkness. In the new days which followed they fared further and still further towards the east, eating their bread in anguish. The green earth-walls of Paradise and the cedars on the high hills sank down behind them and disappeared, but every sunset drew their faces back to the west, and reminded them of the garden of lost delight.

4. THE CRY OF BLOOD.

THEY were still within the borders of Eden when they reached the place which they chose for their home. There, among sheltering rocks and sunny trees, the first of their children, Cain and Abel, were born, and Adam now called his wife "Eve," the Life-bearer. As the years went past, their wild home was filled with troops of children, and these were the joy of the morning, and the solace of the firelight, when men fall to remembering and sadness comes with the thought of things gone by. Mightily the lads grew in strength and the little maids

in beauty, for the glory of God's likeness was about them; the wide land resounded with gladness; and the man and woman had companionship and the help of blithe hands in their toil.

Now Cain took the fruitful soil for his portion, and planted great fields and orchards. He was a man mighty of stature, noble to look upon, but moody and passionate through discontent with his lot. Abel was gentle in spirit; he loved the kindly beasts of the earth, and his were the flocks of sheep and goats on the grassy hills. It happened on a day when Cain gathered the first fruits of the harvest time that Abel brought newborn lambs from the folds, and they each laid them as their offerings before the Lord. God was pleased with Abel and accepted his offering and sent down fire from heaven to consume it, but He saw the repining spirit of Cain, and from his offering He turned away in displeasure. Cain's face darkened with anger, and God rebuked him: "If thou dost well, shall I not bless thee? But if thou dost ill, beware of sin crouching at the door and keen to spring upon thee; master it."

From that day Cain hated and envied Abel. He hid with fair words the wild beast in his heart, but when they were alone together in the distant fields, Cain turned upon his brother and slew him. He covered his body with earth and stones, and stood sullen and irresolute in the great stillness. Then he heard the voice of the Lord, "Where is Abel, thy brother?" "I know not," he answered; "am I my brother's keeper?" And God said, "What hast thou done? Hark!—it is thy brother's blood crying to me from the ground. Now the earth, which opened her mouth to receive the blood of thy brother, curses thee. Never again when thou tillest the soil will she give thee of her abundance. Henceforth thou art an outcast, and shalt wander all thy days."

"My punishment," said Cain, "is more than I can bear. Thou drivest me out of the land; I shall be hidden far away from Thy sight; I shall be a wanderer

and whoever meets with me will slay me"—for the race of Eve, to whom Abel was dear, had increased greatly and were spread abroad in the earth. But the Lord replied, "Nay, if any one slay Cain, sevenfold shall be the vengeance required of him." And God placed a sign upon him for all to see, so that no hand should be raised against his life.

So Cain departed out of the borders of Eden, eastward into the wilds of Nod, which is the Land of Banishment; and his wife accompanied him.

5. THE BROOD OF CAIN.

THEIR lot in the land was the lot of the restless clouds and the leaves drifting. Their wanderings ran into years, and their years ran into centuries; the life of the first race of men was age-long, for they were not made to die. Children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren were born to them—a mighty brood of stormful men and resplendent women. Seeing that the soil was little fruitful, they hunted the great beasts, slew them, and feasted in river caves and under hanging rocks.

But Cain had no abiding-place with his children. Even when the little lads and maidens played fearlessly about him they brought him less of joy than of care; for at all times the phantom of red death haunted him; when he arose it rose up before him, and when he lay down it sat at his feet in the darkness. In his dread he had piled up walls of huge stones for refuge on the hill-tops; but always when his toil was finished the wanderer had awakened in his soul and driven him further into the wilds. Then at length he passed out of the sight and knowledge of men, and no one knew the end of his life.

The line of Cain was five generations, and the strong men of the fifth were Jabal and Jubal and Tubal-Cain. Jabal, the dweller in tents, roamed the grassy steppes with his sheep and cattle and dromedaries; Jubal, the maker of music, invented the minstrelsy of the pipe

and harp; Tubal-Cain, the hammer-man, forged keen weapons and armour out of iron and bronze. They were the sons of Lamech, the man of rapine, whose glory was in the sword-chant and the rush of battle. He was the first of the outcasts to take to himself two wives. Their names were Adah and Zillah, Brightness and Shadow; and the daughter of Zillah was Naamah, the sister of Tubal-Cain. So the brood of Cain grew in riches and turbulence and the fierce delights of the lawless.

6. THE PASSING OF THE ANCESTORS.

GOD had pity on Eve in her sorrow, and gave her in place of Abel another son, who was called Seth. And when the race of Adam had greatly increased and peopled the land, the sons of God beheld the beauty of the daughters of men. Their hearts were filled with desire for them, and they chose wives from among the most beautiful. This was the beginning of the wickedness which corrupted the earth. Their children were the Nephilim, giant men of evil passions, the mighty ones of old time.

Bitter was the grief of the forefathers of the race; but still more bitter was the anguish of the man whom God Himself had made. Hoary with the snows of nine hundred winters, he leaned upon his staff gazing into the west, and the tears fell from him as he remembered his innocence in Paradise and thought of the ungodliness of his descendants. Enoch, the grandson of his great-grandson, rose up with words of prophecy against their wickedness, and foretold the doom that would overwhelm them. But they laughed him to derision, and Adam's heart was broken; and the great penitent died, and returned to the dust out of which he had been taken. Then, on a sudden, in the midst of his warnings, Enoch vanished, and was gone from among men. He was God's beloved; like a little child he had walked with God three hundred years and more; and God did not suffer him to die, but took him to Himself.

One by one the ancestors died in extreme age. Seth died, and Enos, Cainan and Mahalaleel ("God is my splendour"), and Jared, the father of Enoch. Enoch's son was Methuselah, and his son was another Lamech; and when a son was born to this Lamech he was called Noah, "my rest"; for this child, said Lamech, "will be a solace in our toil on the earth which God has cursed."

The world grew continually more corrupt; the thoughts and desires of men were all day contriving nothing but wickedness. In all his generation Noah alone walked in God's ways, and the Lord spoke to him in the grief of His heart: "The end of all flesh has come before me, for the earth is filled with its violence. I will destroy man whom I have made, and every living creature under the heavens, for it is my sorrow that I have made them." God foretold Noah of the flood of waters in which all things with the breath of life should perish, and bade him build an ark, whercin he and his house should be saved from destruction.

7. THE COVENANT OF THE RAINBOW.

NOAH went up into the hills and felled the tall cypress-trees; and as God taught him he laid the length of the ark—four hundred and fifty feet, and its breadth seventy-four, and the height of it five and forty. It was built in three storeys; he fashioned a clerestory for light and air; and when he had fitted great hatches in the side, he made it proof with pitch both within and without. He stored it with all manner of food for the creatures that he was to take with him; and out of the mountains and the ways of the forest God gathered the beasts and the birds, and Noah found room for them in the refuge which he had built.

Still the world paid no heed to the signs and warnings. The harvest was gathered, the vintage was over, and the dissolute towns and villages resounded with revelry and derision. "Yet seven days," said the Lord, "I will stay my wrath; but do thou and all thy house

come into the ark." So Noah, with his wife and his sons Shem, Ham and Japheth, and his sons' wives went up into the ark; and God shut him in. And Noah was six hundred years old.

Now in all the earth there was left but Methuselah alone who had lived in the days of Adam, and he alone of living men had looked upon the face which God had made in His own image. His name was "lord of the spear," but whether he was himself a man of violence it is not told; nor yet whether he had contended in his strength with the workers of iniquity; but surely God had set him in his immense age—nine hundred and sixty and nine years, the oldest of men, for a witness between heaven and earth, and in the last days had taken him to his rest.

The clouds came up, they came up from the four winds, they stood still, darkening in the heavens; but the people laughed in their wantonness: "It is the good rain after the harvest and the heats, the rain of ploughing and sowing." After seven days the rain began; the floodgates of heaven were opened and the fountains of the deep were broken up. The waters rose on all sides, and the people were beside themselves with terror. They fled in multitudes. Their flight was bewildered by the smoke of waters; their cries were confused with the noise of floods and the clamour of rain; men were parted from women and little children were trampled down. They sought refuge in the woods and the woods entangled them; on the rocks, and the rocks held them captive; and darkness fell upon them and made them its prey. Forty days and nights it rained continually; in all the world of man the tops of the mountains were covered, and all life perished under the heavens. The ark alone with its living creatures drifted over the abyss.

When a hundred and fifty days had gone by God sent His wind over the earth. The clouds left the heavens in their clearness. The waters began to fall, and as they subsided the peaks of the mountains

slowly emerged from the immeasurable sea. In the seventh month, in the month of Nisan, on the seventeenth day, the ark took ground on the hills of Ararat. And after forty days Noah opened a window and let loose a raven. It flew to and fro and was coming and going until the waters disappeared. He sent out also a dove of the greenwood, but it found no resting-place, and he took it back into the ark. He sent it forth again after seven days, and it returned in the light of the evening with a newly plucked olive-leaf in its mouth. And Noah rejoiced that the waters were gone and green leaves were growing; and after another seven days he let it fly again, and it came back no more.

This was the end of the flood of waters. At God's bidding Noah and all the creatures came out of the ark. Upon the hill where he stood he built an altar of great stones and offered up a sacrifice of birds and beasts to the Lord. The snowy pinnacle of Ararat shone far aloft in the sun, a rainbow glittered in the eastern clouds overarching the earth, and the wreathing smoke of the burnt-offerings ascended into the pure heavens. Paradise had perished in the waters, and never again would be heard the sound of God walking in the wind of the evening, but the Lord was in the heights of the heavens graciously mindful of the children of men, and He spoke to Noah and his sons: "Behold, I make a covenant with you and with your seed after you and with every living creature. This shall be the token of the covenant, my bow set in the cloud; I shall look upon it in everlasting remembrance; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh, but while the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." And God blessed Noah and his sons, and took His curse from the ground, and gave them lordship over all things living.

8. THE TOWER OF CONFUSION.

So Noah and his sons went forth into a strange earth in the new spring. He made his home in the upland country of Ararat, and his children's children throve and flourished around him. Their numbers increased so rapidly that the vine-clad hills and the valleys laughing with fruit and corn became too small to hold them. They were loth to go, but a time came when they must needs move into wide spaces, and gathering together their sheep and oxen and camels, they set out on a long migration.

For many days Ararat, the high mountain with its snow-fields and its icy peaks, saw them on their journey, and after it had parted from them they entered into the regions between two mighty rivers. These were Tigris and Euphrates, and it is said they are two of the ancient rivers that flowed out of Paradise. Onward they fared through illimitable levels of wild pasture until at length their journeyings brought them to a plain among the palm-trees of Shinar, and they said among themselves: "So far do we wander, so vast are the distances, so great our numbers, that we shall be dispersed and lost in the earth, and no memory left of us. Up then, and let us build a city and a tower that shall reach up to the heavens; so we shall have a rallying-place seen far over the world, and make ourselves a renowned name." For lack of quarries of stone they used clay burnt into brick and for mortar asphalt drawn from the boiling springs, and began to pile up the tower of their vainglory. But the Lord God was displeased with their wilfulness. He struck their speech with confusion, so that they could no longer understand each other. They who had all been of one tongue were now become as strangers using unknown words, and all their work together was brought to an end. They turned bewildered from the walls of their foolishness, and drifted apart into distant lands.

So the place was called Babel, the tower of Confusion.

This was perhaps the tower which King Nebuchadnezzar rebuilt long afterwards as a temple to his god. He built it in seven storeys, and each storey was of the colour sacred to one of the lights of heaven, black and orange and red, golden—and the gold was in plates, pale yellow and blue and silver. But now for ages it has been a huge mound of ruins, in whose crumbling clay there is no form or colour to see.

9. THE GREAT DISPERSION.

NOAH lived for three hundred and fifty years after the flood, and nine hundred and fifty was the measure of all his days. When the earth-wanderings of his sons began he was still alive; but they went out to all the winds, they heard of him no more, and no one knows whether he died in a strange country or among the hills in Ararat.

And of the children of Japheth some fared east, and grew into the powerful nation of the Medes, and others northward, and became the countless Scythians, terrible archers flying on the wild horses of the steppes; and in after times kinsfolk of theirs traded in slaves and copper vessels, horses and mules in the markets of Tyre. And Gomer, the son of Japheth, was father of the Kimmerians, who gave their name to the Crimea. Moving westward they hewed their way through the boundless German forests, and became the Kimbrian fishers and woodmen of Jutland. Into Gaul they spread and Britain, and to this day their name lives in the Cumberland hills and is spoken by the Kymry of Wales. And other children of Japheth were the Cypriotes, and the men of Rhodes, the Ionians of Greekland, the people of Corinth and the isles, who trafficked in the scarlet and purple dyes of the sea-snail, and the Etruscan sea-raiders; but most famous of all were the adventurers who landed under Spanish skies, founded Tarshish looking out into mysterious seas at the end of the world,

and sent their tall ships to Joppa and Tyre with tin and iron, silver and lead.

The children of Ham filled the Nile valley, from the salt marshes to the cataracts. They peopled with dusky tribes the lands of the Ethiops and the Libyans. The Colchians were their kinsfolk, and the men of Sidon, the Philistines and the hill clans of Canaan. In Arabia the dark blood of Ham stirred in the desert-roamers and the traders in cinnamon and ebony, myrrh and frankincense. Nimrod was of his line, Nimrod the mighty hunter who made a sport and a spoil of beasts and men. And Nimrod built Babylon and the cities in Shinar. He was the first of the curled black-bearded kings whose images stalked in colossal stone in the palaces. Over Assyria he cast his iron net, and he founded Nineveh, the marvellous city of human-headed lions and winged bulls.

The race of Shem went into the highlands of Elam, south-east beyond Tigris; and long afterwards the city of Shushan, the Lily, was the splendour of that land. They filled Assyria, whose story has been left half told in arrow-head letters on books of clay. They ascended Arphaxad the plateau between the great lakes Urumiah and Van; and here was born Heber the great-grandson of Shem. Others of their stock were the men of Aram, above Lebanon, and the tribes within sight of the snows of Hermon; but the Lydians held on into the north-west until they looked out over blue seas to the Greek islands. Last, there were the southern folk, men of Mescha (thereabout Bassorah now stands), and of Sheba and Ophir and the haven of the mountain Zafar. And Sheba and Ophir had a golden name for their exceeding rich merchandise.

Those were the world-wanderings of the descendants of Noah after their speech had been smitten with confusion.

10. THE VISION AMONG THE TEREBINTHS.

THE years passed away; and in the sixth generation, when the sons of Heber were shepherd-princes on their pastoral tableland, Terah, the youngest of his line, descended into the great plains of the south, and came to Ur of the Chaldees.

To-day, when the floods of Euphrates are out, the hawk and the kingfisher haunt the ruin-heaps of Ur; in the heat of the year the lizard sleeps among the fragments of its inscribed bricks. But Terah looked on a large and fair city hard by the sea. Shipmen sang in its gates, and landward the low fields, netted with water-ways, enclosed it in palms and pomegranates and tracts of corn and millet fathom-deep. And Terah saw the lofty tower-temples which they had built to the moon and sun; for the children of Ham had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers and bowed down to the shining hosts of heaven.

And Terah spread his tents in the land of Ur. There his three sons, Haran, Nahor and Abram were born; and there long afterwards Haran died. Then the heart of Terah was tempted by the idolatrous city, and he made little household gods and worshipped them. And Abram heard the voice of the Lord calling, "Depart from this country, and from thy father's house, to a land which I shall show thee. I will make thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and in thee all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

So Abram departed, with Sarai his wife and with Lot, the son of his dead brother. Terah too went with them, and they came to Haran on a green slope far away on the north-western plains. Thither too Nahor followed them, and they dwelt there till Terah died. Then Abram and Lot parted from Nahor, and set out with all their flocks and herds and bondmen towards the land of Canaan. They descended by way of Damascus, the rose-red city in the deep woods, passed through its streams and flowering fields, and into Canaan they came.

Going through the land they reached Sichem and the oaks of Moreh. There the Lord appeared to Abram among the grey-green terebinths and said to him, "To thy seed I give this land"; and Abram built an altar to Jehovah who had appeared to him. The great flocks and herds needed continually new pastures, and he moved onward to a mountain east of Beth-el, and there too he built an altar to the Lord. So they wandered from place to place into the South Country. Then a time came when the crops failed and there was a famine, and they turned to Egypt until it had gone by.

11. THE LAND OF THE PROMISE.

As they approached the great wall of Egypt (it stretched on the east from sea to sea) Abram was taken with dread that Sarai might be his undoing; and he besought her to say that she was his sister lest the Egyptians should slay him for her beauty. When the officers of the king saw how fair she was they told of the matter, and she was taken to the palace of Pharaoh. And Pharaoh was gracious to Abram for her sake, and enriched him with gifts of gold and silver, with dromedaries and asses and oxen, and with bondmen and bondwomen.

Abram had fallen from his nobleness, but the Lord saved him from the evil of his ill-doing, and grievous sickness and dismay fell upon Pharaoh and his house. The king questioned his diviners and they learned the truth from Sarai. Then Pharaoh said to Abram, "Why hast thou deceived me and brought evil upon me? Why didst thou say she was thy sister, so that I took her to wife? Now I know she is thy wife; take her again, and go out from this land in peace."

Then Abram and Sarai and Lot departed from Egypt and returned through the South Country to the altar of the Lord near Beth-el. All the country was full of their tribesmen and their possessions, and besides these

there were the people of the land, so that the soil could not bear them, and quarrels arose among the shepherds. And Abram said to Lot, "Let there be no contention between us, we are brothers. The length and the breadth of the land lie before thee, choose thy portion." Lot chose for himself the plain of the Jordan. In those days it was fruitful as Egypt, fair as the garden of the Lord, watered throughout as far as Zoar. He went down to the cities of the Plain and pitched his tents near Sodom, and the men of that city were unspeakably wicked.

As Abram stood alone on the mountain when Lot had gone, the Lord spoke to him and renewed His promise: "Lift up thine eyes and look from the place where thou art, north and south, and east and west; all the land thou seest I give thee and thy seed for ever." Then Abram removed to Hebron, and spread his tents under the terebinths of Mamre; and there he raised another altar to the Lord.

12. THE MYSTERIOUS KING.

Now it happened that after twelve years of subjection the tribes of southern Palestine revolted against Kedorlaomer, the mighty overlord of Elam. With the armies of three vassal kings Kedorlaomer swept down upon them on the eastern side of Jordan, overthrew the giants of the Rephaim, Zuzim and Emim, cut off the cave-men on the ragged mountains of Seir, and went as far as the Oak of Paran on the edge of the wilderness. Long afterwards that wilderness was the Desert of the Wanderings. Returning by Kadesh, he wasted the Amalekites, and fell upon the Amorites among the palm-trees of Engedi.

There the kings of the cities of the Plain encountered him, five kings against four; but Kedorlaomer routed them, and in their flight the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah perished in the asphalt pits in the vale of Siddim. So the five cities of the Plain were plundered,

and the hosts of Elam went their way with immense spoil and a horde of captives in chains.

But a fugitive brought the news that Lot was among the prisoners, and Abram armed his tribesmen and servants, three hundred trained men and upwards; the Amorite sheiks, Mamre and his brothers Eschol and Aner, joined him, and they pursued the kings in hot haste as far even as Dan among the sources of Jordan under the hoary summit of Hermon. They came upon them in the night. They divided their forces, and smote the camp on all sides, slew and scattered them, and hewed them down for two days as they fled beyond Damaseus.

Abram returned with Lot and all his house, with all the spoil of the kings and the captives, men and women, of the cities of the Plain. In King's Dale among the hills the new king of Sodom met him on his way with the music of pipes and cymbals. Melchizedek, king of Salem, came out with bread and wine to welcome him. He was a priest of the most high God; and he blessed him and said, "May the most high God, maker of heaven and earth, bless Abram; and blessed be the most high God who has delivered thy enemies into thy hand." And Abram gave him the tenth part of all the plunder he had taken.

So for a moment the priest and king of a mysterious "City of Peace" appears in that unknown vale; in the last rays as it were of the faith handed down from generations before the flood. Of his lineage there is no record, of his death no memory. Having neither beginning of days nor end of life, this "King of Righteousness" passes away with bread and wine in his hands, like the living image of a dream.

But the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Keep all the booty for thy share, give me but the people." "Nay, by the Lord God," Abram answered, "I take nothing of Sodom, not a thread or shoe-string. Thou shalt not say Sodom made Abram rich. What the young men have eaten—let that go! and the sheiks

that were with me, Aner, Eschol and Mamre, they take their shares.”

13. THE MOTHER OF NATIONS.

THE Lord spoke afterwards to Abram in a vision, “Fear not; I am thy shield, and thy reward shall be very great.” “Lord God, what reward wilt thou give me? Childless I shall depart, and my steward, Eliezer of Damascus, born in my house yet no son of mine, will be my heir.” “Not he,” the Lord answered, “but thy own son shall be thy heir.” And He took him out under the open sky, and bade him count the stars in the glittering heavens. “So shall thy seed be.” And Abram believed, and that was his righteousness.

And the Lord said, “It was I who brought thee out of Ur to give thee the inheritance of this land.” “Lord God,” Abram replied, “by what sign am I to know that I shall inherit it?” Then God the Lord made a covenant with him in the manner of the Chaldeans of old. At His bidding Abram took a heifer, a she-goat and a ram, each in its prime, slew them and cut them in two, and put half on this side and half on that, and on one hand he laid a turtle dove and on the other a young pigeon; for those of the Chaldeans who made such a covenant passed with torches between the slain beasts, saying, “May I die the death of these if I break my oath.” And Abram kept watch, and drove away the hawks and vultures from the carcasses.

But when the sun was going down he fell into a deep sleep, and a horror of darkness came upon him. And the Lord spoke to him, “Know that thy descendants shall be strangers in a land not theirs; in bondage they shall be and oppressed for four hundred years. But I will judge their task-masters, and afterwards they will come out with great riches. As for thee, thou shalt go the way of thy fathers in peace and be buried after a happy old age. In the fourth generation thy children will come hither again.”

Then when the sun had set and it was dark, the Lord passed through between the carcasses, as though it were the fire of a smoking jar and a burning torch. So the Lord God confirmed His covenant.

Yet the time went by, and when Sarai saw that she was still childless, she gave to Abram her bondmaid, Hagar the Egyptian, for his wife, thinking to herself, If God hears me and sends her a child I will adopt it. And a little lad was born, whom they called Ishmael, "God hears." Fearless and wild-hearted he grew up in Mamre, and when he was thirteen years old the Lord appeared to Abram, and said, "I am the Almighty God; walk in my ways and be perfect." And He changed his name from Abram, "the princely father," to Abraham, "the father of a multitude," and Sarai, "the queenly," He called Sarah, "the princess," "for I will bless her," He said, "and she shall be a mother of nations, and kings shall be among her children." And Abraham, falling on his face before the Lord, laughed for wonder but more for joy, and said in his heart, "Shall a son be born to a man a hundred years old?" Then remembering the bright-eyed Egyptian child, "Oh, that Ishmael," he said, "may live before Thy face!" "I hear thy prayer for him," the Lord answered, "and I bless him; he shall be the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. But it is with thy son, the son whom Sarah shall bring thee next year at this time, that I will make my covenant."

14. THE EVIL CITIES.

It was in the heat of the day, and Jehovah appeared to him among the oaks of Mamre, and he sitting at the opening of his tent. Abraham raised his eyes, and three men were standing near him. He rose, he ran to welcome them. Bowing down to the ground, "Oh, my lord," he said, "let me find grace in thy sight, and do not pass thy servant by. Accept a little water for

your feet, and take your rest under the tree. I will bring you a morsel of bread, and do you strengthen your hearts."

They consented, and he bade Sarah bake them cakes quickly; a tender calf was prepared for them with milk and butter, and a meal was set before them. And Abraham stood and served them, and as they ate under the great tree, he knew it was the Lord.

When they would depart, he accompanied them on their way until they looked down from the hills over Sodom. Jehovah said, "There is such an outcry against the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah, that now I am going down thither." And the two men left them and descended towards the Plain. But Abraham was still standing with Jehovah; and he went close to Him and said, "Dost Thou destroy wicked and upright together? Perhaps among them there may be fifty upright men; wilt Thou not spare the city for the fifty? Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?"

"If I find fifty," said the Lord, "for their sake I will spare all the place." "Behold," said Abraham, "I have dared to speak to Jehovah,—I, dust and ashes. It may be they fall five short of the fifty, wilt Thou destroy the city because of five?" "If there be five and forty," the Lord replied, "I will not destroy it." "Perchance," said Abraham, "forty may be found." "For the sake of forty I will not destroy it," the Lord answered, and Abraham still beseeching Him, He promised to spare it for thirty, yea for twenty; "Yea, for the sake of ten," He said, "I will not destroy it."

When He had spoken the Lord was gone from him, and Abraham returned to his abode.

The two angels came to Sodom at evening; and when they had seen the wickedness of the city, they warned Lot to depart with his sons and daughters, his sons-in-law, and all his possessions, "for the Lord," they said, "has sent us to destroy this place." But he paid no heed, and in the early dawn they woke and urged him to go, with his wife and his two daughters,

if he would escape destruction. Still he delayed, and the angels caught them by the hands and hurried them out of the city. "Flee for your lives," said one, "cast no look backward, linger nowhere in the Plain, but seek safety in the mountains." "Oh, my Lord," said Lot, "I have found favour with thee and thou hast shown me thy great goodness, to the mountains I cannot escape before calamity overtakes me. See, yonder is a city near us, and it is little, let me take refuge there, and I shall live." "This grace too shall be granted, and this city I shall not destroy," said the angel; "but hasten, for I can do nothing till thou hast reached it."

It was sunrise when Lot entered Zoar, "the little city." And Jehovah rained down lightning and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah. He overthrew them and all the Plain with their inhabitants, and the earth took fire and there was left neither grass nor tree. Lot's wife lingered and looked behind her; the fiery rain covered her, and she became a statue of salt.

Early in the morning Abraham arose and returned to the place where he had stood in the presence of Jehovah. He cast his eyes towards Sodom and Gomorrah and all the region of the Plain, and he saw smoke go up from the land like smoke from a furnace.

15. THE CHILD OF THE WILDERNESS.

As the Lord promised, so it happened. A son was born to Abraham and Sarah in their old age. As Sarah gazed on the babe at her bosom, "The Lord," she said, "has made my heart laugh"; and they called him Isaac, "Laughter." When he was two or three years old they made a great feast at his weaning, and Sarah saw Ishmael mocking and teasing the child. She was jealous and angry, and said sharply to her husband, "Send out of my sight that Egyptian woman and her son; child of hers shall not inherit with mine." Abraham thought this a great wrong, for he loved the lad; but the Lord said to him, "Let not this vex thee; give

Sarah her way. It is in Isaac that thy race and name shall live. Still the son of thy bondmaid shall come to greatness, for he too is of thy blood."

In the grey of the morning Abraham rose and gave Hagar bread and a skin of water, and she and Ishmael turned from the dark tents. Now this was near Gerar in the South Country, and they lost their way in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. When the water was all spent and they could go no further in the heat, Hagar laid Ishmael down under the shade of a bush, and went an arrow flight away. "Let me not see my child die!" she said, and she sat down and wept aloud.

Then the angel of the Lord called out of heaven to her, "Fear not, Hagar, God has heard the cry of the child where he is lying. Go, lift him up, and hold him with thy hand, for I will make him a great nation." And God opened her eyes; she saw a spring, with water flowing; she filled the water-skin and gave him to drink.

God was with the lad. He grew up in the desert, and became an archer. In the wilderness of Paran he made his home, and his mother took a wife for him out of Egypt.

16. THE UNBURNT OFFERING.

AT Beer-sheba Abraham sank a well, planted round it tamarisks, whose wood is staunch and their green leaves fail not ever, and built an altar to the everlasting God. Then the Lord called to him and put him to this trial: "Take the son of thy love, Isaac, thy only one, go to the land of Moriah, and offer him as a burnt-offering on one of the mountains I shall tell thee."

In the dawn Abraham cleft wood for the sacrifice, saddled his ass, and set out with two of his servants and Isaac his son. On the third day they saw the place far off, a hill-top above a deep gorge, and Abraham bade the servants wait there till his return. Isaac carried on his shoulders the wood for the sacrifice, and

in his hand the pan of fire and the knife. And they went on, side by side.

Then Isaac said, "Father!" and Abraham, "Yes, my son?" "Here," said Isaac, "is the wood and the fire, but where is the lamb for the burnt-offering?" "God will see to the lamb for the burnt-offering, my son." And they went on, side by side.

When they reached the spot which God had said, Abraham built an altar of stones, and ranged the wood upon it. He bound his son, and laid him upon the wood on the altar. Then he took the knife to slay him. But the cry of the angel of the Lord came to him out of heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" and Abraham answered, "Yes, Lord?" "Lift not thy hand; do the lad no harm! Now I know thou fearest God, and hast not refused me thy son, the only one."

Abraham gazed around. In the thicket behind him he perceived a ram entangled by the horns, and caught it and offered it as a burnt-offering in the place of his son.

Once again the angel spoke to him, and renewed all the promises of the Lord; and he and Isaac went down the mountain, and they returned to Beer-sheba.

17. THE CAVE OF MACHPELAH.

TIME passed away, twenty years and more; and Sarah died in Hebron, in Canaan, among the children of Heth, one hundred and twenty-seven years old. When Abraham had wept over her lying dead in her tent, he went up and spoke with the children of Heth as they sat in the gateway of the city. "I am a stranger," he said, "a sojourner in the land, I beseech you then to give me possession of a grave that I may bury my dead." "Listen, lord, to us," they answered; "thou art a mighty sheik in the midst of us; take thy choice among our sepulchres, and bury thy dead. There is none of us who will deny thee his burying-place." Abraham bowed down to the ground before the lords

of Heth and said, "Will you give me leave to lay my dead among you? Then, indeed, I beg you, entreat Ephron, son of Zohar, to give me for its full value in silver the cave at the end of his field in Machpelah, so that I may have a burying-place." Then Ephron, who was sitting among the people in the gateway, answered, "Nay, my lord; the field I will give thee, and the cave that is in it; here in the presence of my people I make them thine; bury thy dead." "Suffer me rather," said Abraham, again bowing low. "I will give thee the price of the field; take it in their presence." "A plot of land, worth but four hundred silver shekels, what is that, my lord, either to thee or to me?" asked Ephron; "wherefore, bury thy dead."

Abraham understood, and with all the children of Heth for witnesses, he weighed out for Ephron four hundred shekels, good trading silver; so the field of Machpelah, the cave, and all the trees in the field and within its borders were made over to him for ever. And he buried Sarah in the cave, opposite to the ever-green terebinths of Mamre.

18. THE COMING OF REBEKAH.

Now in his old age, when Sarah was dead, Abraham wished his son to marry; yet as he would not have him marry a girl of Canaan, and as Isaac must not leave the land of his inheritance, he sent his steward Eliezer into Haran, the city of his brother Nahor. "The Lord," he said, "will send His angel before thee, and thou shalt bring him back a wife from our own kindred."

So Eliezer is come into Haran between the great rivers. It was evening time, and his camels were resting on their knees by the well, outside the city of Nahor. And Eliezer prayed, "Prosper me to-day, God of Abraham my lord. Here am I standing at the well, and the daughters of the city will come and go, drawing water. Grant that she whom I ask for water, and who answers, 'Drink, and I will water thy

camels too'—grant that she shall be the wife Thou hast chosen for Isaac."

¶ He was still praying when Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel, son of Nahor, appeared, with her pitcher on her shoulder; young and most sweet of face. Down the steps of the well she tripped, filled her pitcher, and came up again. Eliezer hastened towards her and said, "Let me drink, I pray, a little water from thy pitcher." "Very gladly, lord," she replied, and quickly lowered the pitcher into her hand; "and I will draw water for thy camels too, until they have had their fill." She poured the pitcher into the trough, and to and fro she hurried for more; and Eliezer gazed at her without a word, wondering if the Lord had prospered his journey.

But when all the camels were watered he took a gold ring and bracelets of massy gold and said to her, "Whose daughter art thou? tell me, I pray; and is there room for us in thy father's house?" She told him who she was, "and in our house," she said, "there is straw and forage in plenty, and also room for the night." Then Eliezer bowed down to the ground, blessing Jehovah who had brought him to the house of his lord's kindred.

Home to her mother's ran the maiden, and told them how thus and thus the man had spoken to her; and Laban her brother, who had seen the ring and bracelets in her hands, hastened out to Eliezer as he stood with the dromedaries at the well. "Come within," he said, "thou blessed of Jehovah! Why art thou standing outside? The house is prepared for thee and there is a place for the camels." And when they came to the house, Laban unloaded the beasts and fed them, gave Eliezer and his men water for their feet, and set a meal before them.

But Eliezer said, "I do not eat until I have told my errand." "Speak," said Laban. So Eliezer told them of Abraham and their kinsmen, and of all that had happened from his setting-out even to the moment when he blessed Jehovah, who had led him thus far to receive the daughter of his lord's brother for Isaac his

son. "And now," he said, "if you will be kindly and true to my lord, let me know; and if not, let me know, so that I may take my course to the right or the left." "The hand of the Lord is in this," replied Laban and Bethuel; "it is not for us to say this or that. Rebekah is at thy bidding; take her and go, and let her be the wife of thy lord's son, as Jehovah has said."

Down to the ground Eliezer bowed before the Lord, and when he had worshipped Him he brought out from his store vessels of silver and gold and garments for Rebekah, and precious gifts for Laban and her mother; and he and his men ate and drank, and rested there for the night. In the morning he asked leave to depart, and when her mother and brother pressed him, "Let her stay with us a little while, a week or ten days," he besought them, "Do not delay me since God has prospered my journey; let me return to my lord." "Shall we see what the girl says?" they answered; and when Rebekah came, "Wilt thou go with Eliezer?" they asked, and "I will go," she answered.

So they made ready for her departure. And they blessed her, "Farewell, our sister," they said, "mayest thou become thousands of myriads, and may thy children hold the gate of thy enemies!" And she and her nurse Deborah and her handmaidens went their way riding on camels in the train of Eliezer.

Isaac was living in the South Country. At the fall of the evening he walked on the moorland musing in quiet, and as he chanced to raise his eyes—lo! dromedaries coming in from the north. Rebekah saw Isaac, and dismounted as women do when a man passes by; and she said to Eliezer, "Who is this that comes towards us over the moorland?" "It is my lord," answered Eliezer; and Rebekah muffled herself in her veil.

Eliezer related to Isaac all he had done; and Isaac led Rebekah into the tent of Sarah his mother. He took her to himself, and she became his wife. And he loved her, and he was comforted for the loss of his mother.

19. THE TWIN BROTHERS.

FOR twenty years there were no little children to play about their tents. Then twin boys were born, Esau and Jacob. Red and shaggy as a creature of the wilds was Esau, and he grew up a sure hunter, a ranger of the wold, impulsive and free-handed, which is the way of men in the large air; but Jacob, shrewd and contriving, busied himself about the tents and in the pastures.

When they were fifteen Abraham died in a good old age, one hundred and seventy years and five, and was gathered to his people in the shadows. Up from the wilderness came Ishmael, with his brood of fierce archers, and in the presence of the children of Heth Isaac and Ishmael laid the great sheik in his sepulchre, in the cave of Machpelah. Then the wild host swept back southward into the immense brightness of the wilderness.

It happened on a day, long afterwards, that Esau returned weary from hunting. Jacob was making pottage over a fire of thorns under a tree, and as the smell of the pottage reached Esau, "Ah, the good red lentils! let me have some, for I am craving with hunger." Jacob looked up smiling, "Nothing comes of nothing—wilt thou barter thy birthright for them?" "Will a birthright feed a starving man?" asked Esau with an angry laugh. "Swear then," said Jacob; and Esau swore away his birthright. Jacob set the red pottage before him and brought him drink, and the shaggy man of the wolds ate and rose up with the strength of ten, heedless of to-morrow.

In the course of time there was a drought. Famine followed, and when Isaac thought to find plenty in Egypt, the Lord directed him to Gerar, instead, and renewed the promises which He had made to Abraham. To Gerar, therefore, which lies below Gaza; and there he dwelt. The corn he sowed bore a hundredfold, and his wealth increased so greatly in flocks and herds and retainers that the Philistines were bitter with envy.

The large wells with water-steps, which Abraham had dug out of the rock, they filled in with earth. Their king bade him leave the land—"Thou art grown too mighty for us." When he moved away and sank new wells, the Gerar herdsmen fought with his own for the water, which they claimed as theirs. Yielding ever with patience, Isaac shifted from place to place. At length the king of Gerar came to him at Beer-sheba and made an alliance with him, and there was peace between them. Isaac then built an altar, as his father had done among the tamarisks, and dug a new well; and at Beer-sheba the snows of age fell upon him, and he grew blind.

When the end seemed to be near he felt a longing for the wild meat of the hills, and he said to Esau, "Away with quiver and bow; fetch me something of thy hunting, and make me one of the toothsome dishes I used to relish. To-day or to-morrow I shall be gone, and I would bless thee before my death." Out to the chase went Esau; but Rebekah had overheard Esau's errand and she told Jacob. "So bring me two good kids from the flock, and thou shalt take thy father the dish he relishes, and he will bless thee before his death." Jacob stood doubtful: "Esau is shaggy; and should my father feel me with a blind man's hands, I may bring down a curse instead of a blessing." "The curse shall be on my head," said Rebekah; "only do as I bid thee."

So the dish was made ready, steaming deliciously; Rebekah clothed Jacob with his brother's bravest garments, covered his hands and neck with the soft shaggy hair of the kids, and he went in to his father. "Who art thou, my son?" asked Isaac at the sound of his voice. "I am Esau, thy first-born," replied Jacob. "I have done all thy will; arise now, and taste hunter's fare, and let thy soul bless me." "How didst thou find thy game so quickly, my son?" "The Lord thy God brought it my way," said Jacob. Isaac sat silent a little while, and then said, "Come close to me,

my son, and let me feel whether thou art my very Esau, or not." When he had felt him, "The voice," he said in uncertainty, "is Jacob's voice, but the hands are Esau's hands"; and once more he appealed to him, "Is it thou who art Esau, my true son?" and Jacob answered "Esau am I."

Then the old father seemed to be satisfied. Jacob set the fragrant meat before him, and brought him wine; and when he had eaten and drunk, Isaac said, "Come, my son,—come near and kiss me." As Jacob came close to him and kissed him, Isaac sniffed the gladdening scent of his garments, the smell of marjoram and the wild thyme of the moorland. "See," he said, and his words fell into a joyful chant—

"See, the smell of my son is the smell
of a field which Jehovah doth bless!
So, may God give thee dew
of the heavens, earth's goodly marrow as well,
Corn of the furrow, and wine of the cluster
in plenteousness.

"Lo, the serfs of my son
shall be peoples; and nations their eyes shall abase.
Lord of thy brothers be thou,
and the sons of thy mother shall bend them before thy
face.
Cursed be he that shall curse thee,
and whoso shall bless thee already I bless."

20. "BLESS ME, ME TOO, FATHER."

JACOB had scarcely gone out from his father's presence when Esau hastened into the tent with the choice dish he had made ready. "Rise up, father," he said, "and eat of thy son's hunting, and bless him." "Who art thou?" said Isaac, and Esau answered, "I am Esau, thy first-born." Then Isaac was taken with a violent trembling, and he asked, "Who then was he that brought me game from the wilds? I have eaten of all before thy coming, and have blessed him—ay, and blessed he is."

Esau, when he heard his father's words, raised a loud and bitter cry, and besought Isaac, “Bless me, me too, father.” “Thy brother came guilefully,” said the old man, “and he has carried off thy blessing.” “Is it because they called him ‘Overreach,’” cried Esau, “that twice now he has overreached me? He cozened me of my birthright; now he has cozened me of my blessing. Hast thou kept no blessing for me?” “Alas,” said Isaac, “I made him thy master, I gave him all his brethren for servants, with corn and wine I endowed him; what on the earth shall I do for thee, my son?” “Hast thou only this one blessing? Bless me, bless me too, father”; and Esau wept aloud. Then Isaac, his father, answered, “Lo, I bless thee—

“Thy tents shall be far from the fat of the land
 And the dew from on high.
 Thy life thou shalt keep with the sword in thy hand;
 But the pride of thine eye
 Shall sink and submit to thy brother's command.
 And yet as thou roamest, a free-ranging folk,
 From thy neck thou shalt shake off his yoke.”

Then Esau went forth from Isaac's tent, and out of the wrath of his wild heart he spoke, “The days of mourning for my father are close at hand; when they have gone by, I will slay Jacob.”

As soon as Rebekah heard of his threat she warned her favourite son, “Listen to me. Thou must away to Laban my brother until Esau has forgotten his anger against thee; then I will send for thee. Why should I lose you both in one day?” And to Isaac she went complaining, “I am tired of my life with the daughters of Heth”—for Esau had taken two wives, both women of the land; “if Jacob marries a girl like these, what will my life be worth to me?” Therefore Isaac sent for Jacob and said, “The wife for thee is not among these women of Canaan. Get thee to Haran, and choose a maid among the daughters of Laban, thy mother's brother. And may Jehovah bless thee with the blessing of Abraham.”

Then Esau understood how displeasing to his father were the Canaanite women, and his mind turned to a wife of his own blood among the maidens in the black tents of Ishmael. So these swift spirits of the air and sun met—the hoary archer of the wilderness, and the red ranger of the wold, ruddy and strong; and Ishmael gave him his daughter Mahalath, “the Harp.” After that Ishmael moved into the open spaces far east of his people, and died there, one hundred and thirty seven years old. But his children, “a great nation,” were spread in their burghs and camps from Havilah by the sea and the Egyptian Wall northward away to the Assyrian border.

Jacob set out for Haran, and it was Rebekah’s pain that she never saw his face again.

21. THE DREAM AT BETH-EL.

ON the third day of his journey Jacob found himself on a rugged hillside as the sun set and darkness fell. Taking a boulder for his pillow, he lay down, without tent or tree above him; and he fell asleep, and dreamed. The great stones of the place had piled themselves into a tower-temple, with sloping ways ascending from terrace to terrace like a ladder into the shining heavens; and the angels of God were ascending and descending. And Jehovah spoke to him from the height of it, “I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac. The earth where thou liest I will give to thee and thy posterity. They shall be numberless as the dust, and in them shall all the families of the earth be blest. I am with thee, and will keep thee whithersoever thou goest, and to this land I will bring thee back home.”

Jacob awoke from his dream, but nothing moved on the hill under the swarming stars. “Of a certainty,” he said, “Jehovah is in this place, and I did not know it.” And fear came upon him in the stillness and the starlight. “What a place of dread is this! It



Abraham offering up Isaac.

is no other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.”

When the dawn broke he raised up for a pillar of memory the stone on which he had slept, and hallowed it with oil of dedication. A vow too he made that if God would go with him on his way, give him bread to eat and raiment to wear, and bring him home in peace at last, he would be constant to Him, and would change this stone into a house of God, and give Him a tenth part of all his possessions.

Jacob called the place Beth-el. In this place it was that Abraham had built his altar of old, but at that time the name of the town hard by was Luz, Almond-Tree town.

22. RACHEL AND LEAH.

AFTER many days of wayfaring Jacob arrived in the land of Haran. On the great plain he came to a well, where three shepherds were waiting with their sheep until all the flocks had been gathered there for the watering at high noon; for over the well mouth lay a large stone, which it needed the help of many to roll away. The men told him they were from Haran town, and knew Laban. “All is well with him,” they said, “and see, yonder is Rachel his daughter who is coming with the flock.”

As soon as he had seen her, Jacob felt that he had the strength of ten; he sprang to the well and heaved away the great stone, and watered her flock. Then he kissed her and wept aloud, and told her he was her father’s kinsman, the son of his sister Rebekah. Away to her father she ran with the tidings; Laban hastened out to welcome him, caught him in his arms, kissed him, and led him into the house; and for a month Jacob dwelt with him. Then marking the care and skill of his shepherding, Laban said to him, “Because thou art my kinsman, should thy service go for nothing? Tell me what wages I shall give thee.” And Jacob answered,

“Seven years will I serve thee for Rachel thy younger daughter.” “I would sooner give her to thee than to another,” said Laban; “remain with me.”

Now Laban had two daughters, Leah and Rachel. Leah was the older, and her eyes were ailing; but Rachel was winsome to see and beautiful, and Jacob loved her. Such gladness he had in loving her that the seven years were like days fleeting away. In due season Laban brought together the people of the place to a marriage feast with lights and music at close of day, and Jacob received his bride hidden in her wedding veil. Then he who had overreached others was himself overreached, for in the light of the morning he saw that his wife was not Rachel but her sister Leah.

“What is this thou hast played upon me?” he cried wrathfully to Laban. “Was it not for Rachel I served thee? Why hast thou befooled me?” Laban endeavoured to appease him. “It is not the custom among us,” he said, “to give the younger sister before the older. But come, do not spoil our week of merry-making, and thou shalt have Rachel too, if thou wilt serve seven years more.” So great was his love for her that he served another seven years for her, and then he married her.

When time had gone by and he wished to return to his own home, Laban was unwilling to let him go: “The Lord has blessed me for thy sake. Stay with me and fix thy own payment; what shall I give thee?” “Nothing, if thou wilt agree to this,” said Jacob. “Let me have the few black and speckled sheep in the flocks, and keep thou all the white; and among the goats all the dark shall be thine, and mine the few that are white and brindled.” “Let it be so,” said Laban. But the few became so many that Laban’s looks were changed, and his sons snarled with envy, “See how Jacob has fleeced father, and come to wealth with what was his!” Richer and still richer the man grew, in flocks and bondwomen and bondmen and camels and asses. When six years had come to an end, Jehovah

said to him, "Go back now to the land of thy fathers and the place of thy birth, and I will be with thee." And Jacob told Rachel and Leah. "Have we still a place in our father's house?" said they. "Nay, we are scarce more than strangers, now that he has sold us and devoured the price we brought him. Do whatever God bids thee."

Laban was away at the sheep-shearing on the plains. Jacob got together his people and flocks and all his goods, set his wives and children on camels, and crossing the Euphrates, turned his face towards the mountains of Gilead.

On the third day Laban heard of their flight. He pursued them a seven days' journey with his brethren, and came up with them in the mountains of Gilead. Before they met, a vision of the night changed his evil purpose, and he said to Jacob, "Why hast thou carried off my daughters like captives of the sword? Why hast thou fled secretly? I would have parted from thee with songs and minstrelsy, but I have not even kissed my children. I am strong enough to harm thee, but the God of thy father has warned me in my dealing with thee. Yet if thou wert neither to hold nor to bind from going to thy father's house, why shouldst thou steal my gods from me?"

"Death on him with whom thou shalt find thy gods," cried Jacob; "search the tents for him." Laban searched the tents—Jacob's and Leah's and Rachel's, and the tents of the two handmaidens, but found no teraphim, for Rachel had hidden them in the camel saddle and was sitting on them. Then Jacob, who knew not that Rachel had taken them, was hot with anger against Laban. "What wrong have I done thee that thou art after me hue and cry? Thou hast ransacked my stuff, what of thine hast thou found in it? For twenty years I have served thee. Are thy flocks diminished? What the wolf devoured was my loss; what was stolen I made good; the bargain was of thy driving. By day the heat wasted me and the frost

by night, and sleep fled from my eyes. Even this day, had not the God of my father, the God of Abraham and Isaac, been for me, of a certainty thou hadst sent me from thee beggared and bare."

Laban was moved by his words. "These daughters," he said, "are my daughters, and these children my children—what can I do for them? Let there be peace and agreement between us." Jacob was nothing loth, and he set up a stone for a pillar of remembrance that they were reconciled. The brethren raised a cairn to mark the limit beyond which ill-will should never move one against the other. Then Jacob offered a sacrifice, and all the kinsmen feasted on the cairn; and that night they remained upon the mountain in Gilead. Early on the morrow Laban the Syrian kissed the sons and daughters of Jacob and blessed them, and returned to his own land.

23. THE WRESTLERS OF THE NIGHT.

JACOB travelled southward, and his heart sank as he thought of his brother Esau whom he had wronged twenty years before. God sent angels to meet him on his way. "These are the heavenly host," he said when he saw them, and he called the place Mahanaim, "the Two Camps," for on each side they guarded him; yet the vision left him disquieted.

Messengers whom he had sent with presents to Esau in the mountains of Seir returned to him and said, "We saw thy brother Esau; he is now on the march towards thee with four hundred men." Stricken with dread, Jacob divided his people, his flocks and herds and camels into two companies, so that if Esau fell upon one the other might escape; and then he cried to the Lord in his distress: "God of my father Abraham and God of Isaac my father, I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies Thou hast shown Thy servant, yet I went forth across this Jordan, I and my staff alone, and Thou hast brought me back in two great companies; deliver

me now from the hands of my brother, for I am in anguish lest he come to slay me and the mother with the children."

Then he took of his he-goats and she-goats, and his ewes and rams in great numbers, and of camels with their colts, kine and bulls, she-asses and foals, and collected them in three droves, and sent them over the brook Jabbok with intervals between the droves, to appease Esau. And when Esau met the herdsmen of each drove and asked "Whose men are you, and whither away?" they were to answer, "We are thy servant Jacob's; these are a present to my lord Esau, and Jacob thy servant is coming behind us."

After the sun had set he had his wives and the handmaidens and his eleven sons across the ford of the brook, yet did not himself pass over, but remained there alone. In the darkness a strange man came upon him and closed with him, and all night long they wrestled together in the solitude. The stillness of the place was troubled with heavy breathing and the sound of their limbs straining; the stones cried out from between their feet, and fell dumb again. When the unknown man saw that he did not overcome Jacob, he smote him on the hip and unlocked the bone, but despite his lameness Jacob strove with him. So all through the mysterious night until the coming up of the dawn. Then the man said, "Let me go; day is breaking," but Jacob answered, "I will not let thee go, until thou hast blessed me." "What is thy name?" the man asked him, and he said, "Jacob." "Jacob shall be thy name no longer," said the man; "but thou shalt be called Israel, God's Wrestler, for thou hast been at grips with God and with men, and hast triumphed." Then Jacob said, "Tell me thy name too, I beseech thee." "What need hast thou to ask it?" the man answered, and blessed him as he loosed his hands.

That spot Jacob called Penuel, God's face. "For here," he said, "have I seen God face to face, and have not perished."

And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he went limping.

24. ESAU THE GREAT-HEARTED

ACROSS the moorland Jacob saw Esau coming with his wild four hundred from Seir—the hunter-sheik in his scarlet cloak, his head-cloth bound with rope about his lion head, and his tufted spear in his hand. Jacob ranged his women and the children in order and placed Rachel and Joseph last of all; and passing out in front of them, seven times he bowed down to the ground as he approached his brother. But Esau ran to him and embraced him, leaned on his neck and kissed his cheeks. And they both wept.

As his eyes fell on the women and the children, Esau said, "Who are these in thy company?" "They are the children God has granted thy servant," Jacob answered; and the women and children drew nigh, and bowed low before Esau. "And what was the meaning of the droves I have met?" he asked. "They were to find favour in my lord's eyes," said Jacob. "I have more than enough, brother," said Esau; "keep for thyself what is thine." "Nay, I beseech thee, do not refuse my gift," said Jacob. "In doing thee homage I have seen thy face—a godlike face in its goodness to me. Accept then my gift, since God has heaped His favours upon me." So Esau yielded to his pressing.

But when he would have them fare onward all together, Jacob pleaded the youth of the children and the harm that would come of hurrying the slow flocks, and begged him to go forward and let them follow as they might. And when Esau would have left him an escort of his spearmen, "What need?" Jacob answered, "let me but have my lord's good will."

Then Esau returned that day to Seir without him.

25. DAYS OF SORROW.

AFTER this many things happened, of which no memory has been kept. When Jacob had sojourned for a time east of Jordan—the place was called Succoth because of the wattled “lodges” he made there for the flocks—he crossed the river, and came to Shechem. There he bought for a hundred “silver lamb” pieces that part of the plain which lies between the mountains of Ebal and Gerizim; and he built an altar of thanksgiving. After he had been long there abiding he heard the voice of God calling him to Beth-el; but before they removed thither the people purified themselves and delivered to him all their false gods, their teraphim, and the talismans they wore for ear-rings. He buried the unholy things under Abraham’s tree beside Shechem, and it was then called “the terebinth of the magicians.”

At Beth-el he built God His altar, as he had vowed, in the place where Jehovah had appeared to him when he fled from Esau. Rebekah his mother was dead, but her old nurse Deborah had come to be with her dear son; and she too died. He laid her to rest under an oak below Beth-el, and thenceforth that tree was called Allon-bachuth, “the oak of weeping.”

They went on from Beth-el, and when they had well nigh reached Ephrath, which is Bethlehem, Rachel’s babe was born. As her spirit was departing—for she died—she called the babe Benoni, “son of my anguish”; but his father called him Benjamin, “son of my right hand”—as if the child were one to lead him thereafter through darkness. In a little dimple among the trees, he buried Rachel by the wayside as you go up to Bethlehem, and raised a pillar over her grave.

At last Jacob turned his steps towards Mamre in Hebron, the place of his childhood, and dwelt by the tents of Isaac his father. The patient old man, long blind, came to the end of his years, a hundred and four score, and his ghost was gathered to the ghosts of his people. Like Ishmael of old, Esau came up from the

wilds of the south, and he and his brother Jacob buried their father, beside Abraham, Sarah and Rebekah, in the cavern of Machpelah.

Then Esau passed away from his brother's face into the mountains of Seir, and was the father of mighty dukes and a fearless people.

26. "MY SON'S COAT."

ISRAEL made his home in Hebron; and these were his twelve sons—Reuben, his first-born, and Simeon and Levi; Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun; Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher; and Joseph and Benjamin were the children of his old age.

Now the story goes back a little way. Rachel was but cold in her grave under the wayside trees, and Benjamin a babe in the bosom; Isaac the aged was still alive, hoary and blind; and Joseph, the son of Rachel, was in his seventeenth year, and for her sake was more to Israel than all his children. Israel made him a coat checkered with bright colours, but the lad was hated by his brothers because he told of their doings, and because they said that their father loved him more than them all.

Joseph had a dream, which he told them: "We were binding sheaves in the fields, and my sheaf arose and stood upright, but your sheaves drew near and bowed down to it." Another dream he had, which he told to them and his father: "I gazed at the heavens, and the sun and the moon and the eleven starry creatures grouped in the heavens did me homage." His father rebuked him. "What foolish dream is this?" he said. "Are we—I and thy mother and thy brothers, to prostrate ourselves at thy feet?" Yet his father kept these things in remembrance, but his brothers hated him still more for his dreams and words.

Not long afterwards Israel said to him, "Are not thy brothers afield at Shechem? I would have thee go and bring me word how they fare, and if all be well

with the flocks.” But when Joseph reached Shechem, they were not there, and a man in the fields told him, “They are gone; I heard them say they were away to Dothan.” So to Dothan, the low green hill of the Two Wells, he followed them.

A long way off they saw him coming, and they said among themselves, “Here is the dreamer of dreams! Let us kill him and fling him into one of the cisterns; we shall say a wild beast devoured him, and we shall see what his dreaming comes to.” “Nay, let us not take his life,” said Reuben. “Shed no blood, but drop him into this cistern in the wilds”—for he hoped to save the lad and give him back to his father.

So when Joseph joined them, they sprang upon him, stripped off his coat of bright colours, and cast him into the cistern, in which there was no water. Then they sat down to eat, but Reuben was not with them.

While they were eating they saw a caravan of traders, Ishmaelites and men of Midian, coming from Gilead, and the dromedaries were laden with spices—tragacanth and balsam and attar of rock-roses for the markets of Egypt. Said Judah, “What good shall we get if we slay our brother and hide our guilt? Rather let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and not lay hands upon him; he is of our flesh and blood.” So, when the caravan was passing they drew Joseph out of the cistern, and sold him to the merchants for twenty pieces of silver, and the Ishmaelites took him into Egypt.

Reuben returned alone to the cistern, but Joseph was not there. He rent his garments and ran to his brothers, crying, “The lad is gone—and I, whither shall I go?” They told him what they had done. Then they killed a goat, and drenched the coat of bright colours with its blood, and sent it to their father. And this was the message they sent with it, “See what we have found. Look well whether it be thy son’s garment or not.”

Israel recognized it: "My son's coat! A wild beast has devoured him; torn in pieces—torn in pieces is Joseph." He rent his robe, put sackcloth about him, and long he mourned for his son. All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but of their comfort he would have none. "Grieving I go down to my child," he said, "into the shadowy places of the dead." And he wept for Joseph; and Isaac the blind old father wept with him.

The Ishmaelites sold Joseph in Egypt, to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's guards. And the Lord was with Joseph.

27. A READER OF DREAMS.

JOSEPH was comely, and as quick and willing as he was winsome, and Potiphar looked on him with favour. When he saw, as time went by, that the young slave had brought the fortune of God upon his house, he raised him to places of trust and power, made him at last his overseer; and God's blessing prospered all that Joseph took in hand, in house and field. His master's wife watched him going to and fro, and she fell in deadly love with him; but when he would not care for her at all, her love turned into wicked hatred. She made false charges against him, and Potiphar in anger (less, it may be, because he believed her than because he was losing a servant who had freed him from all care) cast Joseph into prison among the king's prisoners. There too God was with him, and the captain of the prison entrusted everything to his charge.

Now it happened that two of the great courtiers, the chief cup-bearer and the chief of the confectioners, offended Pharaoh and were committed to the king's prison. Joseph was appointed to attend upon them. After they had been, it may be, a year in durance, he saw that their faces were downcast when he came to them in the morning. "Why do you look sad to-day?"

he asked. "We have had a dream," they replied, "and we cannot call the interpreters to read it for us." "Do not interpretations belong to God?" said Joseph—"tell me your dream."

Said the chief cup-bearer, "In my dream I saw a vine. It had three branches. First it broke into blossom; then the blossom was strewn, and the grapes grew ripe in clusters. Pharaoh's cup was in my hand; I crushed the grapes into the cup, and I gave the cup to Pharaoh." "This is the interpretation," said Joseph. "The three branches are three days. Three days more and Pharaoh will release thee and restore thee to thy place, and thou shalt put the cup into his hand again. Remember me when thou art happy; and if thou wilt speak of me to Pharaoh, I shall be delivered from these walls. From the land of the Hebrews I was carried off a captive, and here I have done nothing for which I should be in bonds."

Then the chief of the confectioners took heart and said, "I too was in a dream. I was carrying three wicker baskets on my head. In the topmost were all kinds of baked meats for Pharaoh, and the birds were eating from the basket on my head." Joseph said, "This is the interpretation. The three baskets are three days. In three days Pharaoh will take off thy head and hang thee on a tree, and the birds will eat thy flesh."

The third day was Pharaoh's birthday, and he made a feast for all his court. He released the chief cup-bearer and the chief confectioner; the one he restored to his place, the other he hanged as Joseph had foretold.

The cup-bearer thought no more about Joseph. He forgot him.

28. SEVEN YEARS AND SEVEN YEARS.

Two years afterwards Pharaoh had dreams in the night, from which he awoke with a troubled mind. All the magicians and interpreters of Egypt were

summoned before him, but no one could read the meaning of his dreams. Then the chief cup-bearer said, "To-day I recall what it is my shame to have forgotten," and he told Pharaoh of Joseph and the dream of his own deliverance. Messengers hurried to the prison, and Joseph shaved himself and changed his garments, and was brought quickly into the presence of the king.

"I have had a dream," Pharaoh said to him. "No one can read it for me, and I have learned that thou hast the gift to explain a dream when thou hast heard it." "It is not I," Joseph replied, "but God who will answer Pharaoh for his welfare."

"In my dream," said Pharaoh, "I was standing on the bank of Nile, the great river. And seven kine, fat of flesh and fair of seeming, came up out of the river, and fed among the grass and reeds. After them other seven came up, lean and unsightly and starved; I have not seen the like in all the land of Egypt. The lean and unsightly kine devoured the fair and fat of flesh, and were nothing the better in their unsightliness. I awoke, and slept again. Again I saw in my dream seven ears of corn growing on one stalk, full and goodly. Then seven other ears, empty, thin, shrivelled by the east winds, sprang up after them. And the thin ears swallowed the full ears. I have told the magicians, but none of them can read my dreams."

Said Joseph, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one vision. The seven fair kine and the seven full ears are seven years. The seven lean kine and the seven thin ears are other seven years. And God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do. There will be seven years of abundance throughout the land of Egypt. And seven years of famine will come up after them and eat up all the abundance, and the land will be consumed. And what Pharaoh has dreamed twice, God will do quickly. Now let Pharaoh place a wise and discreet man over the land, and let him appoint overseers and have them heap up corn and provisions in all the

cities, and store a fifth of the whole harvest during the seven abundant years against the seven years of dearth, so that Egypt shall not perish of famine."

Sage counsel this seemed to Pharaoh and his servants, and Pharaoh asked them, "Shall we find a man the like of this, having the spirit of God within him?"—then, turning to Joseph, he said, "There is none so wise and discreet as thou art. Over my house and my people I set thee; without thee no man shall lift hand or foot in Egypt; I on my throne shall alone be greater than thou."

From his own hand Pharaoh took the signet-ring and put it on Joseph's; he clothed him in garments of byssus, the fine white linen, and laid about his neck a collar of gold, and made him ride in the chariot which followed his own; and the negro runners sped on before him, with gilded canes and with whips, crying aloud, "Bend the knee, bend the knee!"

Pharaoh gave Joseph the name of Zaphnath-paaneah, "revealer of hidden things," and married him to Asenath, the daughter of Potipherah, priest of On, the house of the sun.

Joseph was thirty years old. Thirteen years were gone since the Ishmaelite traders had weighed out twenty pieces of silver beside the green hill of Dothan. Rachel's babe was now a beloved lad, the light of his father's eyes. And as the negroes ran before Joseph, Esau and his wild followers were riding to Hebron, for the blind old patriarch Isaac was dead. He died without knowing the greatness to which God had raised the grandson for whom he grieved.

29. JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS.

THE seven years of plenty! The earth gave lavishly, filling both hands. In every city the granaries were filled from the fields around them, and Joseph went through all the land and heaped up corn like sand of the sea.

Before the years of dearth came, two sons were born to him—Manasseh, “Forgetting,” and Ephraim, “Fruitful,” for “God,” he said, “has put all my troubles out of mind, and made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.”

Then the great hunger began, and in every land there was famine. But there was bread in Egypt. The store-houses were thrown open, and out of all the parched fields of the world strangers came in multitudes to buy corn. Far away in Hebron Jacob said to his sons, “Why do you sit looking at each other? They tell me that in Egypt there is corn. Go down and buy us some that we may not perish.”

Ten of Joseph’s brothers went, but Jacob would not suffer Benjamin to accompany them lest he should meet with mischance on the journey. When they were shown into Joseph’s presence they bowed their faces down to the ground. Joseph looked at them and knew them, and he remembered his dreams of the sheaves and the starry figures in the heavens. But they did not recognize him in the stately viceroy of the lord of Egypt. He spoke to them sharply—suspected them of being spies inquiring into the weak places of the realm. “No, our lord,” they answered; “to buy food thy servants have come. We are true men; never have we been spies. Twelve brothers are we, all sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and the youngest is with our father, and one of us is no more.” “Nay, but spies you are. And I will put your words to the test, for, as sure as Pharaoh lives, from this place you shall not go until your youngest brother comes.” Three days he kept them in ward, and on the third he sent for them. “If you be true men one of you shall remain a prisoner, but the rest of you shall go back with corn to your homes—for I fear God—and bring me your youngest brother.”

Then the ten said among themselves, “The anguish of Joseph has overtaken us. We had no pity when he implored us, and we saw the suffering of his soul.”

“Did I not tell you,” said Reuben, “to do the lad no harm, and you would not listen to me? Now we must atone for his blood.” When Joseph heard them he turned from them and wept. They did not know he understood them, for he had spoken through the interpreter. He came back to them and ordered Simeon to be bound before their eyes, and he sent them home laden with corn. When they were resting at the khan one of them opened his sack for forage and found the price of the corn in the mouth of it, and afterwards each of them discovered that his silver had been returned in the same manner, and their hearts sank with dread of unknown dangers gathering about them.

When they told their father all that had befallen them, and how they had left Simeon a captive until their return with Benjamin, Jacob exclaimed bitterly, “You bereave me of my children. Joseph is gone, Simeon is gone, now you take Benjamin from me. The lad shall not go with you. His brother is dead, and he alone is left. If he meets with mischance on the journey, you will bring down my white head in sorrow to the grave.”

And still the country was oppressed with famine. When all the provisions brought from Egypt were consumed, Jacob said to his sons, “Go oncc more and buy us food.” “If you will send our brother with us,” said Judah, “we will go; without him we shall not go; for the man said, ‘Unless your youngest brother be with you, you shall not see my face.’” “What evil thought possessed you,” said Jacob, “to say you had a brother?” “The man questioned us—‘Is your father still alive? Have you a brother?’ Could we know that he would say, ‘Fetch me your brother’? Trust the lad to me, and let us get upon our way. We might have now been back for the second time but for our delay.” And “Slay my two sons,” said Reuben, “if we do not bring him back to thee.”

Then said Jacob, “If it is ‘needs must,’ then take the governor a present—a little balsam and honey,

tragacanth and rose-attar, pistachio nuts and almonds; and have with you double the price of the corn, and also the silver found in your sacks (perchance it was an oversight). May the Almighty God grant you to find favour in the man's eyes, and him to let your brother and Benjamin come back to me. But if I am to be bereft of my children, so let it be."

They came down into Egypt and into the presence, and when Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he bade his intendant lead them into the palace and prepare a meal for them to dine with him at noon. But they were in dread of being seized for the silver found in their sacks, and they hastened to explain to the intendant. "Be of good cheer," he said. "It was your God, and the God of your father, who placed treasure in your sacks. I had your money." He brought Simeon out to them, gave them water for their feet and provender for their asses.

At noon they cast themselves down at Joseph's feet and presented their gift. He asked after their health. "And your old father," he said, "is he well? Is he still alive?" "Thy servant our father," they answered, "is well; he is still living." Casting his eyes on Benjamin, his brother, his own mother's child, he said, "Is this your brother you told me of?" and he added, "God be gracious to thee, my son;" and his heart was full so that he could not help weeping, and he hastened into his chamber and wept there. Having washed his face he returned and the noontide meal was served. They were seated apart, the Egyptians from the Hebrews, and Joseph from both, and his brothers marvelled that they had been placed each according to his age. Joseph sent them meats from the dishes before him, but five times more to Benjamin than to the others; and they drank and made merry.

Then Joseph ordered his intendant to fill the men's sacks to overflowing and to lay the money of each in the opening of his sack, and besides the money to place his own silver cup in the sack of the youngest. As

soon as it was light the men were sent on their way. They had gone out of the city but were not yet far off when Joseph called to the intendant, "Up, and pursue them, and say this to them, 'Why have you repaid good with evil? Is it not the silver cup from which my lord drinks and in which he foresees hidden things? It is an ill thing you have done.'"

They answered eagerly, "God preserve thy servants from such villainy! Did we not bring thee back from Canaan the silver we found?—how then should we steal silver or gold from thy lord's house? Whoever among us has taken it, let him die, and the others shall be thy bondmen." They made haste to unload the sacks; they opened and searched them, beginning with the sack of the eldest and ending with that of the youngest; and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. They rent their garments, each loaded his ass, and they returned to the city.

Joseph was still in his house. They fell at his feet, and he upbraided them. And Judah answered, "What shall we say, what words shall we find, how shall we clear ourselves? God has laid bare the iniquity of thy servants. We are thy bondmen."

"God forbid!" Joseph said; "he with whom the cup was found shall be my bondman; but you—return you home in peace to your father."

30. THE PLEADING OF JUDAH.

THEN Judah drew near Joseph and said, "For pity's sake, my lord, suffer thy servant to speak a moment, and let not thy wrath burn against him, for thou and Pharaoh are as one. My lord questioned his servants, 'Have you a father or brother?' and we said, 'We have an aged father and a young brother, the child of his old age. There was another, but he is dead, and their mother is dead, and he is left alone; and his father loves him.' Thou saidst to thy servants, 'Bring him down to me, that I may see him with my

own eyes.' We answered my lord, 'The child cannot leave his father; if he leaves him, his father will die.' And thou saidst, 'If your young brother does not come down with you, you shall not see my face again.' When we returned to thy servant our father we told him what thou hadst said. When then our father said to us, 'Go down once more to Egypt and buy us a little food,' we made answer, 'We cannot go down; but if our young brother be with us, we shall go; not otherwise shall we see the man's face.' Thy servant our father said, 'You know that my wife had two sons. One went away from me—a wild beast devoured him, I think; I have not seen him since. If you take this one also and mischance befalls him, you will bring down my white head in sorrow to the grave.' Now, if I go back to thy servant, and the lad not with us—seeing that our father's life is bound up with the lad's life, our father will die when he sees that the lad is not there, and we shall bring down the white head of thy servant in sorrow to the grave. I gave my surety for the lad, saying, 'If I do not restore him to thee, I will bear the blame as long as I live.' I beseech thee, suffer me thy servant to be thy bondman instead of the lad, and let him go up home with his brothers. How shall I go up to my father, and the lad not with me? I cannot look upon my father's anguish."

Then Joseph could restrain himself no longer before all those who stood in his presence. "Clear the hall," he cried; and there was no one with him when he made himself known to his brothers. He wept with loud sobbing. The Egyptians heard him weeping; the house of Pharaoh heard him.

He said to his brothers, "I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?" But they stood in dismay, and could not speak. "Come closer to me," he said. "I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. Be not disturbed that you sold me; it was to save your lives that God sent me hither before you. And God has made me the right hand of Pharaoh, master of his

house, and lord over Egypt. Make haste and return to my father, and say to him, ‘Thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen and be near me, and I will sustain thee, for there be yet five years of famine.’ Tell my father of all my glory, and bring him down hither with you as speedily as you may.”

He hung upon Benjamin’s neck and wept, and kissed all his brothers, weeping.

When the tale spread to the ears of Pharaoh, he bade Joseph send up wagons for the women and the children; and “let them not be sorry for what they leave, the good of all the land of Egypt shall be theirs.” And Joseph gave each of his brothers new garments, but Benjamin he gave five changes of garments and three hundred silverlings. For his father he sent ten asses loaded with the good things of Egypt, and ten with corn and fare for his journey. And bidding his brothers good-bye, he said, “See that you do not have words on the way.”

31. “LET ME DIE NOW.”

THEY went up out of Egypt and into the land of Canaan. They said to Jacob their father, “Joseph is alive; he is lord over all the land of Egypt.” But Jacob’s heart was numb with cold, he did not believe them. They told him all that Joseph had said to them. The wagons of Egypt that were to bear him away—he saw them, and his soul revived. “It is enough!” he said. “Joseph my son is still alive. I will go to him, I shall see him before I die.”

He set out upon his journey. At Beer-sheba he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac, and in a vision of the night God spoke to him, “Jacob, Jacob! Do not fear to go down into Egypt. There I will make of thee a great nation. I myself will go down with thee. I myself will bring thee back again; and Joseph will close thine eyes.” He went down from Beer-sheba. In the ox-wagons of Pharaoh he went

down, with his sons and their wives and their children. The ways were filled with them, with their flocks and their cattle and all the goods of their getting in Canaan.

Joseph went out in his chariot to meet him. They met in Goshen; and Israel threw himself on his neck, weeping, again and again, and said, "Let me die now, since I have seen thy face, and thou art still alive." And seeing they were shepherds Pharaoh settled them in the land of Goshen, a green land and well watered.

Joseph brought his father into Pharaoh's presence, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. Pharaoh said to him, "What is the number of the years of thy life?" and Jacob answered, "The days of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years. Few they have been and evil, and they have not attained to the years of the pilgrimage of my fathers." Again Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and withdrew from his presence.

In the years of the famine all the money in Egypt and Canaan was brought to Joseph for corn. "Give us bread! why should we die before thy eyes?" cried the Egyptians, and bartered their flocks and herds, their estates, their very lives; and all the land became Pharaoh's, and throughout the length and breadth of it the people were removed into cities. But as for the priests Pharaoh sustained them, and their lands were not sold.

All the days of Jacob's life were a hundred and forty-seven years, and the time came when he must die. Standing beside the bed with Manasseh and Ephraim, Joseph said to him, "These are my sons, whom God has given me in this country." Jacob kissed them and blessed them. "I did not think to see thy face," he said, "and God has let me see thy children." All his own sons he blessed, and he said to Joseph, "Do not bury me in Egypt, if thou wilt be good to me; but carry me up and let me be with my fathers." Joseph promised, and Jacob lay back on his pillow, and gave up the ghost.

They embalmed him; and there went up to his

burial all the officers of state, the nobles of Pharaoh's house, and the elders of the land; and all the sons of Israel, so that in Goshen the little children and the flocks and herds alone were left. A mighty company, chariots and horsemen, they rode through the wilderness. Seven days of mourning they tarried at the threshing-floor of Arad, and there was lamentation so grievous that the place was called Abel-mizraim, "the mourning of the Egyptians." In his own land they buried him, in Canaan, in the cave of Machpelah over against Mamre; and there perchance he lies to this day in his gold mask in his painted coffin of sycamore.

When their father was gone a great fear of Joseph disquieted his brothers, and they sent to him, saying, "Before he died our father Jacob bade us send thee this message, 'Oh, forgive the wickedness of thy brethren, who wronged thee.' Forgive therefore the evil-doing of the servants of the God of thy father." They themselves also came, and fell at his feet, and said, "We are thy bondmen." Joseph wept and answered, "Do not be afraid of me; who am I to take God's place? You thought to do me evil, but God changed it into good, to save the lives of many people." He spoke to their hearts and comforted them.

Joseph lived one hundred and ten years, and saw his children's children to the third generation. He said to his brothers at the end, "I am dying; but God will visit you, and lead you out of this country into the land which he promised to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and you shall carry my bones with you far from here."

Joseph died, and they embalmed him and laid him in a coffin in Egypt.

32. IN THE HOUSE OF BONDAGE.

ALL Joseph's brethren died, and generation after generation passed away; but the children of Israel

increased exceedingly. They became a mighty people and the land of Goshen was filled with them.

It was a rich and pleasant land. Fish abounded in the canals and pools of the inundation; birds in the reedy lakes swarmed among the lilies and papyrus flowers; countless sheep and cattle ranged in the open. Palm-groves and teeming villages rose on mounds set above the Nile flood; the vine and the almond and fig-tree grew in the gardens. Of lentils and melons, leeks and onions there was no end; and the barns, full of corn and durra, were high as heaven.

All manner of skill and craftsmanship the children of Israel learned from the Egyptians; they grew cunning in weaving and dyeing and embroidery, in jewel-work and in the working of wood and stone, and of gold and silver. Evil too they learned, no less than good. For the land was full of sacred beasts. The Egyptians worshipped them; they bowed down to their images, to idols with the faces of birds and of brutes; they went out with garlands and branches to the feasts of the lights of heaven. And the children of Israel began to forget the name of Jehovah, and they too bowed down before the hawk-headed and goat-shanked, and before Mnevis the shining bull-calf, and changed the glory of God into the images of beasts and creeping things.

A conqueror arose who became king over Egypt, and Joseph was an unknown name to him. When he saw the number and strength of the children of Israel, he feared that, if any war broke out, they might join with his enemies and escape beyond his power. So he put over them ministers of forced labour, and afflicted them with heavy burdens. They built for him the store cities, Raamses and Pithom, the house of Tum the sunken sun, the sun of the under-world. But the more he oppressed them the more they throve and increased in numbers.

Then the taskmasters made their lives still more grievous with all manner of labours, for of all the master-

builders of Egypt this Pharaoh was the most magnificent. He reared gorgeous temples, and filled the land with avenues of sphinxes, storied obelisks and giant statues; and the children of Israel were worn and wasted with brick-making and mason-work and with dragging immense blocks of white limestone and red granite. Still their numbers grew, and Pharaoh decreed that every man-child should be slain or cast into the river.

Now it happened on a day that the daughter of Pharaoh came to the river to bathe, and her companions walked along by the water-side. Among the tall papyrus reeds which sheltered the spot she saw a little papyrus boat floating. She bade her maiden fetch it, and when she opened it, there lay a babe, and it weeping. The princess took pity upon it and said, "It is a child of the Hebrews." So indeed it was. For three months its mother had kept it hidden, and when she could hide it no longer she had laid it in its little boat among the reeds, and the babe's sister was watching from a distance what would happen to it. Now the babe's sister said to the princess, "Shall I fetch thee a Hebrew woman, and she shall suckle the child for thee?" and the princess said, "Do so." The girl brought the babe's mother and the princess said to her, "Take this child into thy care, and suckle it for me; I will pay thee thy hire."

So the mother took the babe and suckled it, and when he had grown she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter. He became her son to her, and she called him Moses, "because I drew thee out of the water." In the temple of On, where Pharaoh's obelisks * flashed the sun from their gold caps out into the pastures of Goshen, the youth was taught in all the lore of the priests and became a mighty man in word and deed. He had not been blind to the suffering of the people of his own

* One of these now stands on the Thames Embankment, and conceals at the base the Bible in English and French, the Pentateuch in Hebrew, Genesis in Arabic, and a verse of St. John (iii. 16) in two hundred and fifteen languages.

race, and when he was well-nigh forty years old it came into his heart to better their lot. Seeing one of them beaten by an Egyptian, he slew his persecutor, and buried him in the sand. He deemed that they would understand that God was beginning their deliverance, but they understood not. The next day, when he saw two of them at strife and said, "Why do you wrong one the other? you are brethren," the stronger thrust him aside—"Who made thee a prince and judge over us? Wouldst thou kill me as thou didst kill the Egyptian?" And the tale of these things spread quickly to the ears of Pharaoh.

A spark of fire was falling among the dry reeds of oppression! Pharaoh perceived the danger, and sought to slay Moses, but he fled beyond the great Wall, and southward through the desert into the land of Midian. He sat and rested beside a well. At evening the seven daughters of Jethro the Midian sheik, a priest of the Lord God, brought their flock and filled the water-troughs, but shepherds came up and drove them away. Moses leaped up to help them, routed the shepherds, and watered the sheep for them. When they told their father how the Egyptian had befriended them, "Where is the man?" he asked; "why did you leave him so? Go, and pray him to break bread with us."

Moses was content to abide in the tents of Jethro, and Jethro gave him his daughter Zipporah, "Little Bird." When their son was born he was called Gershom, "a stranger here," for Moses knew in his heart that Midian was not his home.

Then Pharaoh died; and the children of Israel cried out from the grievousness of their bondage, and God heard them. He remembered His covenant with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. Four hundred years had gone by since Jacob had come down into Egypt to look upon the face of his son Joseph.

33. PHARAOH OF THE HARD HEART.

MOSES dwelt in Midian forty years, and as he wandered far and wide with Jethro's flock, he came to know the secrets of the mountains, each gorge and chasm, and all their windings from sea to sea; the haunts of the ibex, the partridge and the quail; badger's earth and leopard's lair; the wadys where clear brooks flowed and feathery palms grew thickest and nightingales sang. For this was the wilderness, not the desert.

The mountains raised aloft their mighty buttresses and pinnacles in a wild splendour of light and colour. Thyme and myrrh and other aromatic herbs grew on their savage slopes and in the clefts of the rocky walls which bounded wady and gorge. Sometimes the valley was narrow and deep, floored with ash-grey gravel; sometimes it was a wide plain with fantastic boulders scattered over it. The granite rising sheer on either side was of all colours—pale blue, the red of burnt iron, crocus-yellow, the rose of porphyry, black; and if nothing better, thorn and acacia, broom and tamarisk grew there.

Moses came with his flock to the great mountain in the range of Horeb, to Sinai, the mountain of God. Among the rocks he saw an acacia bush in a blaze of fire. For all its burning, neither branch nor leaf was consumed, and as he approached in wonder at the sight the angel of the Lord spoke to him out of the flame of the bush burning: "Moses, Moses, take off thy sandals; where thou standest it is holy ground." And again He said, "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

Moses covered his face, for he dared not look at God. And the Lord said, "I have seen the affliction of my people in Egypt; I have heard their cry and I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them and to lead them into a good land, a land of milk and honey. Now, therefore, I send thee to Pharaoh, and thou shalt lead my people out of Egypt." But Moses answered,

“Who am I, to go to Pharaoh, and to lead the children of Israel?” “I will be with thee,” said the Lord. “Speak what I have told thee to the elders of Israel. They will listen to thee, they will go with thee to the king of Egypt, and thou shalt say to him, ‘The Lord God of the Hebrews has appeared to us. Give us leave then to make a three-days’ journey into the wilderness, to sacrifice to the Lord our God.’ He will not let you go—no, not unless by the strong hand; but I will smite Egypt marvellously, and then he will let you go.”

Moses answered, “The elders will not believe, they will not listen. They will say, ‘No Lord appeared to thee.’” God said, “What art thou holding in thy hand?” Moses said, “A rod.” “Throw it on the ground.” Moses threw it down, and at once it was no rod but a serpent, and Moses fled from it. The Lord said, “Put out thy hand and take it by the tail”; and when Moses did so, it was a rod again. “That shall be a token that I have appeared to thee.”

Still Moses was unwilling, and he said, “O my Lord, I am not eloquent, but slow of speech.” The Lord answered, “Who made man’s mouth? Go, and I will teach thee what to say.” Then Moses cried out in hopelessness, “O my Lord, send some one else, I beseech Thee.” The Lord was angry then with Moses, and He said, “Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? He is now on his way to meet thee. Thou shalt put the words into his mouth, and he shall speak them to the people for thee. I will be with thy mouth and with his mouth. Go, and take this rod with thee; with it thou shalt work wonders.”

Moses returned to Jethro, and having taken leave of him, set out with the rod of God in his hand into the mountain ways towards Egypt.

To Aaron the Lord said, “Get thee into the wilderness to meet Moses.” And Aaron met him in the mount of God, and kissed him, and was glad at heart. For they were brothers, sons of Amram and Jochebed,

and Miriam was their sister. Moses was four score years old, and Aaron four score years and three.

They delivered the message of the Lord to the elders of Israel, and showed the tokens of their truth before all the people. These believed that God had heard their cry, and bowed down and worshipped Him. But when Moses and Aaron appeared before Pharaoh, saying, "Give the children of Israel leave to go into the wilderness and sacrifice to the Lord, lest He strike them with pestilence or the sword," Pharaoh answered "Who is the Lord that I should obey Him? I know not the Lord, and I will not let Israel go. And why do you keep the people from their work? Away to your labours." And Pharaoh charged the taskmasters to lay heavier toil upon them; "and see you give them no more straw for brick-making, let them find themselves straw." So the people were scattered in the fields, gathering stubble for straw; when the tale of bricks fell short the Hebrew foremen set over them were beaten; and when these complained to Pharaoh, he scorned them, "Ye are idle, ye are idle!" Bitterly the foremen reproached Moses and Aaron, "Goodly service you have done us with Pharaoh and his taskmasters—you have put a sword into their hands to destroy us!"

Then Moses turned to the Lord God and said, "Lord, why hast Thou dealt evilly with the children of Israel? Why hast Thou sent me? Since I spoke to Pharaoh in Thy name, he has oppressed Thy people, and Thou hast not delivered them at all." The Lord bade Moses give the people reassurance of His promises, but they would not listen because of the cruelty of their bondage.

Then said the Lord to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh, and bid him let my people go. He will not hear thee. But I will lay my hand upon Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord." Moses and Aaron went in to the king's presence, but Pharaoh said in derision, "Work me a wonder as a token of the Lord." Aaron cast the rod of God upon the ground, and it was changed into an angry serpent. Then Pharaoh

summoned his seers and enchanters; they too cast down their rods, and the rods by illusion became serpents, but the rod of the Lord sprang upon them and swallowed them up. Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not let the people go.

At sunrise on the morrow the king of Egypt went forth with music and dancing to worship the sacred river. On the brink of the river Moses and Aaron awaited him, as God had commanded them, and they said to Pharaoh, "This is the word of the Lord, 'Let my people go that they may serve me. Hitherto thou hast not listened. Now I will show thee that I am the Lord.'" Aaron lifted up the rod and struck the river, and the waters were turned to blood. The fish died; the river stank; the Egyptians loathed its waters. For seven days the water was blood in pots and tanks, in jars of stone and vessels of wood throughout the land of Egypt. The magicians did the like by their enchantment. Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not let the children of Israel go.

Again Moses delivered the word of the Lord to Pharaoh, "Let my people go"; and again Pharaoh refused. Aaron stretched out the rod, and from the streams and pools a plague of frogs came upon the land. They swarmed into the houses; they defiled the food; they croaked in Pharaoh's bed-chamber; they squatted on his bed. This wonder also the sorcerers imitated by their magic; but the plague they could not abate, and Pharaoh besought Moses, "Intreat the Lord to take the frogs away, and I will let the people go." On the morrow the frogs died in all the houses, villages and fields; they were swept up in heaps, and Egypt stank; but so soon as there was a respite Pharaoh hardened his heart, and would not keep his word.

Yet again three times, and a fourth time, God laid His hand on Egypt. Aaron smote the dust of the ground and the dust turned to lice and ticks, plaguing man and beast. The cunning of the magicians failed them, and they said, "This is the finger of God."

The Lord sent a plague of flies—black clouds of gnats, mosquitos, dog-flies, stinging pests from the marshes, and except in the land of Goshen all Egypt was wasted with them. Pharaoh said to Moses, “Go, and sacrifice to your God, but let it be within the borders of the land.” But Moses said, “How shall we sacrifice in Egypt? If we slay a sacred beast for a burnt-offering to the Lord, will not your people stone us? Three days’ journey into the wilderness we shall go, and sacrifice as the Lord has told us.” “I too will go with you,” said Pharaoh, “but let it not be very far. Pray the Lord now to take away the flies.”

The third time, the Lord slew with murrain the cattle in the field, the horses and asses, the camels and sheep; but in Goshen no harm befell the beasts of Israel.

The fourth time Moses took handfuls of ashes from the furnace, and flung them into the air. They drifted in small dust over the land and spread boils and blains among men and beasts.

These three times, and the fourth time, Pharaoh’s heart was hardened; and he would not let the people go.

Then the Lord sent His word to the king of Egypt, “Let my people go, or this time I will send all my plagues into thy heart. Had I stricken thee with pestilence thou wouldst have vanished out of the world; but I have spared thee to show thee my power and to declare my name to all the earth”; and the Lord warned him of what would befall him on the morrow. Those of the Egyptians who took the warning to heart placed their folk and flocks in safety out of the fields. On the morrow Moses reached out his rod towards heaven, and the Lord sent thunder, and hail mingled with fire-balls, and lightning running along the ground. All over Egypt, save in the land of Goshen, men and beasts were stricken in the open, and hail broke the trees, which the Egyptians loved, the barley in the ear and the flax in blossom, but as yet the wheat and rye were not come up. Pharaoh confessed his sin: “The Lord is righteous; I and my people are wicked.

Beseech the Lord that there be no more mighty thunderings and driving hail. I will let you go, and withhold you no longer." Moses went out of the city of Zoan, and stretched up his hands to the Lord, but when the king of Egypt saw that the fire and the hail and the thunderings ceased, his heart became as flint.

Once more Moses spoke to Pharaoh, "Thus saith the Lord, 'How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself to me? Let my people go, that they may serve me,' " and once again he warned him. The courtiers of Pharaoh now said, "How long will this Hebrew be a snare for our feet? Let the men of Israel go out and sacrifice to their God. Dost thou not yet see that Egypt is destroyed?" So Moses and Aaron were brought back into the presence and Pharaoh said, "Go and worship the Lord your God. Who are those that are going?" "We shall all go," Moses answered, "we and our children and our old men, our sons and our daughters, and our sheep and our oxen; it is our feast in honour of the Lord." "The Lord be with you when I let you and your children go! No, you have evil designs in your mind. Your men-folk shall go alone, and they shall serve the Lord; that is what you asked"; and they were driven out of the king's presence.

Then Moses stretched his rod against Egypt. The Lord led a wind out of the east all that day and all night. In the morning it brought the legions of the locust. Such had they never been seen before, and such have they never since been seen. They covered the ground, they darkened the day, they ate up every herb of the land and all the fruit of the trees the hail had left; no green thing remained on earth or tree in the land of Egypt. Pharaoh bade them bring Moses and Aaron. "I have sinned," he said, "against the Lord your God and you. Forgive me this once, and beseech Jehovah to take this death away." Moses besought the Lord, and He brought a great gale out of the west; and it lifted up the legion locust and cast it into the Red Sea. Yet once again Pharaoh refused to let the people go.

The Lord said to Moses, "Stretch forth thy hand towards the heavens." Moses stretched his hand forth, and for three days Egypt was clothed with darkness as with a garment. They sat in the darkness, and saw not each other; for three days none rose from his place; but among the children of Israel there was light. Pharaoh in his dismay sent for Moses. "Go," he said, "and serve Jehovah; your flocks and your herds you shall leave behind; your children you shall take with you." "We cannot go without sacrifices and burnt-offerings," Moses replied. "Our flocks shall go with us, not a hoof shall be left, for we know not what our offerings to the Lord shall be until we come to the place." Pharaoh rose up in anger, "Out of my sight! Never look upon my face again. The day I set eyes on thee again, thou shalt die." "It is well," Moses answered, "I will see thy face no more."

For a moment he stood silent and august in the presence of the king; then he spoke, "This is the word of the Lord, 'Upon a midnight I will pass through the land of Egypt; and all the first-born in the land shall die—from the first-born of Pharaoh, seated on his throne, to the first-born of the bondwoman who turns the upper stone of the hand-mill, yea, to the first-born of the beasts. In all the land of Egypt there shall be such wailing as there hath never yet been, and the like shall never be again.' All these thy servants shall then come down and fall at my feet, supplicating me, 'Get thee gone, thou and thy people.' Thereafter I shall go forth from Egypt." Moses departed in burning wrath from the presence; but the Lord said to him, "Pharaoh will not heed my warning; but I will bring one more plague upon Egypt, and he will let thee go."

The children of Israel made themselves ready for their pilgrimage, for "when Pharaoh does yield," said the Lord, "he will drive you hence suddenly and in haste." Going in to their neighbours, the men and women said, "Give us of your jewels and vessels of silver and of gold that we may go out in seemly wise to

the feast of Jehovah," and the Egyptians were friendly, and let them have what they asked; indeed both in the eyes of the people and of the nobles of the land Moses was a great and princely man.

On the tenth day of the month Abib, the green April month, the Hebrews took for each household an unblemished lamb or kid from the folds; on the fourteenth day, between eventide and the sunset, they killed it, and roasted it whole with fire, and broke not a bone of it. In its blood they dipped a bunch of hyssop and sprinkled the lintels and doorposts of their houses. When the sun had gone down and it was a new day they feasted, each in his own house. They stood, with their robes girt, like travellers ready to depart, their sandals on their feet and the staff of wayfaring in their hand; they ate the lamb with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

That night no one went out of doors.

Upon the midnight the Lord God passed through Egypt, and smote all the first-born in the land, from the first-born of Pharaoh to the first-born of the captive in the dungeon and the first-born of the beasts of the field. Pharaoh rose up in the night, for the son of his delight was dead—"the son who drew towards him his father's heart, the royal scribe, the singer, the chief of the archers, the uræus-snake in the front of the royal crown," his first-born, who sat with him on his throne. His ministers rose up, and all the Egyptians; there was a hurrying of lights, and a great cry went up in Egypt, a terrible ululation and beating of hands, for there was not a house in which there was not one dead. But the Lord saw the blood on the lintels and doorposts in the clear moonlight; He passed over the houses of the children of Israel, and suffered not the destroyer to enter.

With confused sounds of voices and flying footsteps, messengers sought for Moses and Aaron. Pharaoh said to them, "Depart from among my people, you and the children of Israel. Go and serve the Lord, as you have



The Finding of Moses.

said. Take your flocks and your herds, and get you gone. And bless me also!" The Egyptians crowded about them, and besought them to get upon their way, "Hasten, hasten! or we are but dead men."

This was that night of the Lord's passover, which was observed by the children of Israel in all their generations. On that night the sojourn of Israel in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years, and that same night was the end of their sojourning. The month Abib was made for them the beginning of months, the first month of the first year of a new time; the reckoning of the year of Egypt they used no more. From that night the first-born in Israel, the first-born of man and the first-born of beast, was set apart for the Lord; it was His; and the first-born of man was redeemed at a price. The observance of these things kept for ever green the tale of their deliverance; the tale was told from father to son; it was always in the mind, like a writing bound upon the arm or worn between the eyes.

34. THE FLIGHT OUT OF EGYPT.

"HASTEN! hasten! or we are but dead men."

For many anxious weeks the children of Israel had prepared for the hour of their deliverance. This night they were girt and shod for a journey; they had eaten and been strengthened for wayfaring. They were as eager to depart as the Egyptians were to have them hasten.

Swift runners were sent speeding through the moonlit land with the word for their outgoing. Signal-fires were kindled; signal-horns gathered the tribes in the villages and the shepherds in the open. The fields of Goshen were wakened, and the night was filled with the sound of immense movements, the hoarse rumour of men and of beasts advancing and converging innumerable; for the Lord had marked out the line of their march—not by the way of the Great Sea and the River of Egypt, lest they should be scared back to their bondage by the

hosts of the giant Philistines, but eastward to the sun-rising.

From Raamses they journeyed to Succoth, about six hundred thousand harnessed men on foot, children of Israel with their bondmen and retainers; and in their midst they bore Joseph with them, embalmed, and princely as on the day he died. Besides these there were the women and the children, the little ones; and the sick and the aged, men and women. Great herds of cattle moved with them; the land ran with flocks of sheep and goats, like a running sea. Their way was beside the great canal of the Nile water, through April pastures deep in grass and flowers. And hanging upon them, went up also a rabble of the oppressed, fugitive serfs and captives of war.

From Succoth they journeyed to Etham. They passed Pithom, the store city, where, in one vast block of granite, the Pharaoh of their oppression sat between his gods, the rising and the setting sun. They encamped before Etham, the fortress on the Wall of Egypt, and beyond was the wilderness. There the Lord bade them turn aside into the south, and the Lord of hosts led them. In the manner of the mighty war-lords of old He went before them, in a pillar of cloud by day, by night in a pillar of fire. To Pi-hahiroth He led them, "the place of reeds"; there between the watch-tower of Migdol and the sea He fixed their encampment; and across the sea rose the mountain of Baal-zephon, "the lord of the north." On the shore, over against the mountain of Baal, He bade them encamp.

The captain of Etham sent swift riders to the king of Egypt, saying, "The Hebrews are fled into the south; they are beset between the mountains and the sea; the desert shuts them in." The rage of the king and his nobles was kindled against Israel. "Why," they said, "did we let them go? We shall have their labour no more." And Pharaoh yoked his chariot, and he took six hundred chosen chariots, the redoubted chariots of Egypt, each with its horseman and archer,

and he pursued them, and came upon them at sundown encamped by the sea.

The children of Israel saw afar the dust of his driving; they knew it was Pharaoh pursuing; terror fell upon them, and they cried out to the Lord. Some said to Moses, "Were there no graves in Egypt that thou must needs bring us out to die in the desert? Did we not say to thee, Leave us alone to serve the Egyptians; better it is to serve them than to die in the desert?" Moses answered, "Do not be afraid; stand still, and see the deliverance which God gives you this day. To-day you see Egyptians; Egyptians you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you."

Then the angel of God which led the array of Israel came and took his stand behind them, and the pillar of cloud which had gone before them shifted and followed after them; and the darkness of the cloud separated the Egyptians from them, but the cloud gave Israel light when the sun had gone down. The Lord said to Moses, "Bid the children of Israel go forward; do thou stretch thy rod out over the sea and divide it, and they shall go down into the way of the sea and pass through it dry-shod."

Moses did so, and a rushing wind from the east rolled back the waters, and left the sand of the sea dry; the pillar of fire cast its light on the dry way of the sea; and all that night the children of Israel went down into the sea, they and their flocks and herds, and struggled with the great gale, and crossed over dry-shod between the waters.

While the last of their harnessed men drew near the further side the darkness of the cloud passed away from the tower of Migdol and "the place of reeds"; the waning moon shone upon the silent shore, and the Egyptians beheld how the Hebrews had fled. The waters lay divided before them; with a fierce clamour they whirled down into the wind-swept way of the sea, the horses and the chariots of Pharaoh; the moon-gleams ran along the driven waters on either hand.

At the break of morning the Lord looked out of the pillar of cloud and of fire upon the host of Pharaoh. He struck them with panic fear; the wheels of their chariots sank into the sand, the plunging horses wrenched off the wheels of their chariots. "Let us flee from Israel," they cried; "Jehovah is fighting for them against us."

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out thy hand over the sea." As he did so, the strong wind veered round to the west, and the sea returned to his strength. The Egyptians fled in the teeth of the surf. The Lord shook them off. The sea came back, the sea covered them, chariots and horses, horsemen and archers in bronze mail. Not one of them returned.

Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hands of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore. Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song; and Miriam, the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took in her hand a timbrel, and all the women followed her, and mingled in the song with dance and music. Thus the men sang:

I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously;
The horse and the horseman hath He thrown into the sea.

The Lord is my strength and song,
And He is become my salvation.
He is my God, and I will glorify Him;
My father's God, and I will exalt Him.

And the women answered the men, dancing and beating their timbrels:

*Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously;
The horse and the horseman He hath thrown into the sea.*

Jehovah is a Lord of battle;
Jehovah is His name.
Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath He cast into the sea;
His chosen captains are gone down in the Red Sea.
The deeps do cover them;
They sank into the depths like a stone.

And again the women answered :

*Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously ;
The horse and the horseman hath He thrown into the sea.*

Thy right hand, O Lord, is glorious in power ;
Thy right hand, O Lord, dasheth the foe in pieces.
In the greatness of Thy excellency
Thou overthrowest them that rise up against Thee ;
Thou sendest forth Thy wrath,
It consumeth them as stubble.
With the blast of Thy nostrils the waters were heaped together ;
The floods stood upright as a mound ;
The deeps were hardened in the heart of the sea.

The enemy said : I will pursue, I will overtake,
I will divide the spoil ;
My vengeance shall be sated upon them ;
I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.

Thou didst blow with Thy wind,
The sea covered them ;
They sank as lead
In the mighty waters.

Once more broke in the refrain to the sound of the timbrels :

*Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously ;
The horse and the horseman hath He thrown into the sea.*

Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods ?
Who like Thee is glorious in holiness,
Venerated in praise,
Working wonders ?
Thou stretchedst out Thy right hand,
The earth swallowed them.
Thou in thy mercy hast led forth
The people which Thou hast redeemed.
Thou hast guided them in Thy strength
Unto Thy holy habitation.

The peoples have heard it, they are troubled ;
Anguish takes hold on the inhabitants of Philistia ;
The dukes of Edom are amazed ;
The mighty men of Moab, trembling takes hold upon them ;
All the inhabitants of Canaan are melted away.
Terror and dread shall fall upon them ;
By the greatness of Thine arm
They shall be as still as a stone,
Till Thy people pass over, O Lord !

Till the people pass over,
 Which Thou hast purchased.
 Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them on
 the mountain of Thine inheritance,
 In the place, O Lord, which Thou hast made
 for Thee to dwell in,
 In the sanctuary, O Lord, which Thy hands
 have established.
 The Lord shall reign for ever and ever.

And Miriam and the daughters of Israel made answer amid the joy of the dance and the timbrels :

*Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously ;
 The horse and the horseman hath He thrown into the sea.*

Yet Pharaoh himself perished not in that overthrow. More bitter than death, perchance, was that vision of the sea turning back and covering the host of his chariots. In his last desolate years he inscribed on the obelisks of Zoan sorrowful memorials of the first-born of his old age, "the son who drew towards him his father's heart, the singer, the chief of the archers."

35. THE THREE UPON THE HILL.

THIS was the end of bondage. Before them lay the desert beyond the Great Wall, and beyond the desert the land of milk and honey which the Lord had promised them.

For three days they journeyed into the south over a rolling waste of gravel and sand, desert scrub and thorn, and it was waterless. The pillar of cloud led them; the immense multitude, the vast flocks and herds, the wagons bearing their dead prince and the spoil of Egypt toiled after it in weariness and thirst. At last, oh joy! there was a glimpse of green trees, and they came to a place of springs and pools; but the water was brackish. Marah, "bitterness," they called it, and murmured against Moses; but the Lord showed him a tree with which he sweetened the waters.

Over another stretch of rolling desert they passed

for three days more; low hills closed in upon them; with cries of gladness they hailed the oasis of Elim. There are twelve springs of water; feathery palms three score and ten, green tamarisks, acacias, aromatic shrubs; over the pebbles a brook bickers down the wady, wild flowers and ferns hang over it; birds are singing; water-fowl rise from the rushy pools. They encamp, they rest by the waters. The sheep and cattle are scattered over the hill-sides.

When they removed, their route was through the hills and down a broad valley with palms and water-pools. They came out from between the tall cliffs of sandstone and chalk, and pitched their tents by the sea. Meadows of beautiful green weed floated on its azure and dark-blue waters; on either side limestone ranges closed the view, and at sunrise the western and at sunset the eastern summits glowed as if strewn with roses. They never looked on Africa so near again.

On the fifteenth day of the second month after their departure from Egypt they entered the barren waste of Sin. Food failed them, and they lamented bitterly in their hunger, "Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in Egypt, when we sat by the flesh-pots, and ate bread to the full. You have brought us into this desert to slay the whole multitude with famine." Moses rebuked them, "You are not murmuring against us but against the Lord," and Aaron bade them all draw near into the presence of Jehovah for He had heard their repining. As he spoke, the children of Israel looked out into the desert, and they beheld the splendour of God in the cloud. And Jehovah said to Moses, "Tell them, 'At eventide you shall eat flesh, and in the morning you shall eat bread; and you shall know that I am the Lord your God.'"

When the sun was going down the wind brought a countless flight of quails from over the sea, and they covered the camp; in the morning when the dew went up in mist the ground was covered with grains thin as

hoar frost, and the people asked, "What is it?" Moses replied, "This is the bread God has given you to eat"; and he bade them gather it, each for his household. It was to be gathered in the morning, for it melted in the heat of the sun; if it were kept beyond the day it rotted and bred worms. He that gathered much got no more than he who gathered less, but each received what he needed. On the sabbath day it was not rained from heaven; but on the sixth day each was given bread for two days, and it was not corrupted.

But the children of Israel were perverse, they would not obey; and when they went out to gather the food on the sabbath day, the Lord said to Moses, "How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and my laws? The Lord hath given you the sabbath, and bread for the sabbath; let every man then abide in his place on the seventh day." On the seventh day therefore the people kept the day of God's rest. They called the bread "Manna." It was white, like coriander seed, and it tasted like thin cakes made with honey. A vase of it was laid by for future generations to see. For forty years, until they entered the land of Canaan, manna they never lacked.

Out of the desert of Sin the people went up among the granite hills and they turned into the broad and winding valley of Rephidim. Between its jagged walls of brilliantly coloured rock an oasis extended for miles with green trees and fruitful gardens, but the tribesmen of Amalek had gathered in wild swarms to defend their wells and palm-groves, their flocks and pastures.

In the torrid windings of the valley before the oasis began there was no water, and the children of Israel clamoured against Moses, "Give us water to drink. Why didst thou bring us out of Egypt to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?" Moses appealed to the Lord, "What shall I do with this people? A little more, and they will stone me." The Lord answered him, "Take thy rod, and take with thee the elders of Israel, and I will stand before thee

on the rock of Horeb. Thou shalt strike the rock, and water shall spring out of it that the people may drink." Moses struck the rock of Horeb in sight of the elders and water flowed; and he called the place Massah and Meribah, "provocation" and "chiding," because the people provoked the Lord with their clamour, "Is Jehovah among us or not?"

Then Amalek attacked them, falling upon the stragglers among the hills and cutting off the faint and weary. Moses gave the command of his harnessed men to Joshua, the son of Nun. "To-morrow," he said, "I will stand on the top of yon hill, and I shall hold in my hand the rod of God; and thou shalt face Amalek and smite him." In the morning Moses, Aaron and Hur ascended to the hill-top, which overlooked a great tract in Rephidim; princely they stood, far-seen in the clear light. Joshua and his host clashed with Amalek and fought him. The multitude of Israel waited at gaze, looking now to the turmoil of the battle, now to those three upon the hill; and they saw that the victory was not with Amalek, neither with Israel, but with the Lord of battles; for when Moses held on high the rod of God Israel was the mightier, and when he lowered his hand Amalek prevailed.

All day they fought, and the arms of Moses grew heavy; but Aaron and Hur heaved up a rock, and he sat upon it, and one on this side and one on that, they held his hands aloft and kept them steady until the setting of the sun. In the red light and the lengthening shadows Joshua overthrew Amalek, routed his horde, hewed them down with slaughter beyond telling.

In Rephidim Moses built an altar, and called it Jehovah-nissi, "the Lord my banner"; and because Amalek had laid a hand on the throne of God, he wrote in a book that it should not be forgotten, and he rehearsed in the ears of Joshua, this word of Jehovah, as the Lord had commanded him, "I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven."

36. THE WISDOM OF JETHRO.

WHEN the fame of these things was spread through the mountains, and Moses was encamped in Horeb, he was told on a day, "See, here cometh the priest of Midian, Jethro thy father-in-law, to see thee, with thy wife Zipporah and thy two sons, Gershom and Eliezer." Moses hastened out to meet them and he saluted Jethro, "Peace unto thee," embraced him, and kissed him on either cheek; then with their right hands clasped together, they said again and again to each other, "Art thou well?" "Thank God, well."

Moses led them into the tent, and told them of all that God had done for Israel; and Jethro rejoiced at it, and said, "Blessed be God, who has delivered you out of the hands of the Egyptians. Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods." He prepared burnt-offerings and offered up a sacrifice, for he was a priest of the Lord; and Aaron and all the elders of Israel came and ate with him in God's presence.

On the morrow, when Jethro saw how Moses sat from morning until evening judging and deciding questions between the children of Israel, and how the people crowded upon him with little and less, "This is not good," he said; "it is too much for thee alone, and thou art fraying thyself to threads. Let me give thee counsel, and God prosper it! Do thou be the people's spokesman with God; lay their cause before Him. Teach them ordinances and laws; show them the way in which they should walk, the work they must do. But choose from among them able men, men of truth, who fear God, who hate covetousness—make them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, rulers of tens. Let them judge the people at all seasons, and bring only great matters before thee. If thou wilt do this—and may God set thee to do it!—thou wilt be equal to it, and all the people will come happily to their destination."

Moses followed his father-in-law's counsel; and

after kindly leave-taking Jethro went his way into his own land.

37. THE COMMANDMENTS.

IN the third month, on the same day as that wherein they were brought out of Egypt, the children of Israel entered the wilderness of Sinai. That long valley between granite cliffs was as an avenue of rocky giants, leading them up to the mighty steeps which are the mount of God. Clothed with fair colours are the heights of that mountain—blue and rose and dark purple; glazed with ice or whitened with snow in the cold of the morning; kindled with a fire of gold when the sun goes down. Their stone is the oldest in the earth; neither sea nor soil has covered it; it has not risen, it has not moved in its place since the evening and the morning of the third day. The children of Israel pitched their tents before the mountain.

At the sound of His voice Moses went up to God; and the Lord said to him, "This is my word to the house of Jacob, 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagle's wings unto myself. Now, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my especial treasure above all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'" The whole of the people answered, "We will do all that the Lord has said."

To Moses the Lord said, "I will come to thee in a thick cloud, and the children of Israel shall hear me speaking with thee and will believe thee for ever. Go and sanctify the people to-day and to-morrow; on the third day Jehovah will come upon Sinai before the eyes of them all."

So the people purified themselves, and washed their garments. In front of the mighty rock of Sinai, which rose up in a sheer precipice from the wilderness, Moses set up boundaries, so that none should come too near

the rock; to touch it was death. On the third day, in the morning, a dark cloud rested on the top of that immense precipice; within it were thunders and lightnings and the sound of an awful trumpet. Out of their camp in the wilderness Moses led the people, trembling with fear, to the foot of the mountain. Sinai was altogether wrapped in rolling smoke; the Lord descended upon it in a storm of fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a furnace. The whole mountain was quaking.

Ever more terrible the trumpet sounded. Moses cried to the Lord. Jehovah answered in a loud voice, and bade him ascend to Him. Moses went up. "See thou charge the people strictly that they press not upon the mountain to gaze upon God, lest many of them perish." "They cannot press forward," said Moses, "for we set boundaries as Thou didst command, and the ground was made sacred." "Away, get thee down," the Lord said; "thou shalt come up afterward with Aaron." And Moses obeyed.

Then out of the smoke and lightnings and the thick darkness, the children of Israel, who had come out from among the gods of Egypt, from among the images of the lights of heaven and the bird and brute headed gods, heard Jehovah speaking to them with a great voice :

"I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Thou shalt have no other gods before my face.

Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, or any likeness of the things that are in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth; thou shalt not bow down before them, nor serve them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children down to the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and showing mercy, down to a thousand generations, to them that love me and keep my commandments.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain, [giving it to idols made by the hands of men].

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the day of rest of the Lord thy God; thou shalt not do any work, neither thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy town gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

Honour thy father and thy mother, so that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God is giving thee.

Thou shalt not kill.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house; thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour's."

At the foot of the mountain the people heard the thunderings and the sound of the trumpet and the great voice, they saw the lightnings and the mountain smoking, and they fled, trembling, to a distance, and cried out to Moses, "Speak to us, thou, and we will hear thee; but let not God speak to us, or we die." Moses stilled their terror, "It is to try you that God is come, that you may have the fear of Him before your eyes, and sin not."

Still they stood afar off, and Moses approached the deep darkness wherein God was. The Lord said to him, "Declare this to the children of Israel, 'You

have seen that I have talked with you out of heaven. Gods of silver and gods of gold you shall not make to bring them beside me.' Thou shalt build an altar of earth whereon to offer thy burnt-offerings and thy thank-offerings, thy sheep and thy oxen. If thou shouldst build an altar of stone, the stone shall be the rude and rugged stone, thou shalt not fashion and profane it with thy hand; nor shalt thou go up by steps to my altar. In what place soever I shall make my name remembered, I will come to thee and I will bless thee."

Many laws and judgments God gave to Moses, and he wrote them all in the book of the covenant.

Early on the morrow Moses rose and built an altar under the sheer precipice of the rock; twelve pillars of stone he set up for the twelve tribes of Israel; and he sent young men of the first-born to offer sacrifices. Half the blood of the victims he sprinkled on the altar. He read aloud to the people the words of Jehovah from the book of the covenant, and with one voice they answered, "All that the Lord hath said, we will do and be obedient." He sprinkled them with the rest of the blood, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you."

Then he and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up into the mountain. They saw God. Under His feet it was like a work of bright sapphire, like the heaven itself in clearness. God laid not His hand on the nobles of Israel to harm them. They saw God, and they ate and drank of the sacrifice of thank-offerings.

Among the ordinances written in the book of the covenant were these:

"You shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If they at all cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry, and my wrath shall wax hot; I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.

“If thou meet thy enemy’s ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again.

“Thou shalt not oppress a stranger; for you know the heart of a stranger, seeing you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

“Six years thou shalt sow thy land and gather in the fruits thereof; but the seventh year thou shalt let it rest, that the poor of thy people may eat, and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat. So with thy vineyard and thy oliveyard.

“Three times in the year thou shalt keep a feast in my honour. Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread for seven days at the time fixed in the month of Abib, for in that month didst thou come out of Egypt. Thou shalt keep the harvest feast, the first fruits of thy labours in the fields; and the feast of ingathering, at the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in from the fields the fruit of thy toil. Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord God.”

38. WITH GOD ON THE MOUNTAIN.

ONCE again the Lord said to Moses, “Come up into the mountain to me, and I will give thee tablets of stone with the law and commandments which I have written for their instruction.” Moses bade the elders await his return. “You have Aaron and Hur with you,” he said; “should any one have matters to settle, let him go to them.”

He ascended the mountain with Joshua. A cloud covered it. For six days the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord dwelt upon it; in the eyes of the children of Israel the glory was like a devouring fire. On the seventh day the Lord called to Moses from out of the cloud. Moses went into the midst of it to Him; and for forty days and forty nights he was with God upon the mountain.

The Lord bade him have the children of Israel

bring to Him, with willing hearts, offerings of gold, silver and brass; blue and purple and scarlet stuffs, fine white byssus, and goats'-hair cloth; ram-skins and dolphin-skins; acacia wood, precious stones, and oil and spices for light, for anointing, and for incense.

“And let them make me a hallowed place, that I may dwell in the midst of them.” Lo, as God talked with him, He showed him in little an image of the hallowed place, all glittering with gold and silver, coloured with blue and white and scarlet, adorned with angelic figures. “Thus,” He said, “and thus thou shalt make it,” teaching him to fix the ridge-pole and make the tent of goats'-hair cloth, with clasps of bronze joining width to width, so that the length of it was sixty feet and upward, and the breadth of it five and forty. And the hair cloth was to be covered with ram-skins dyed red and with blue dolphin-skins.

Within the tent was the tabernacle of the Lord, the place of His dwelling, formed of acacia wood overlaid with plates of gold and fixed in blocks of silver for a foundation. It was covered with hangings of white byssus and of blue, scarlet and purple cloth broïdered with cherubims, and joined together with clasps of gold. And the chamber of the tabernacle was divided—the holy place from the most holy place—by a veil of white and blue, purple and scarlet, figured with cherubims, and hung from four pillars of acacia-tree plated with gold and sunken in blocks of silver. And within the veil he was to place the ark of the testimony.

On all sides of the tabernacle there was to be a court, a hundred cubits in length and fifty in breadth, shut in with hangings of byssus on silver rods between pillars of bronze. And the gate of the court was to be hung with blue and white and scarlet and purple wrought with needlework.

After the same fashion was the hanging for the entrance of the great tent, and it was hung on pillars of acacia-tree, overlaid with gold and sunken in sockets of heavy bronze.

So the hallowed house was filled with colour in that land of light and of bare mountains of gorgeous stone.

As to the ark of the testimony, this is what the Lord showed to Moses: a shrine of acacia wood—two cubits and a half the length of it, a cubit and a half the breadth, and the height of it the same—plated over with pure gold; with rings of gold in which lay acacia staves covered with gold, for men to bear it. “And thou shalt lay up within the ark,” said the Lord, “the stone tablets of the testimony, which I shall give thee.”

On the top of the ark was a slab of solid gold, whereon stood two cherubims with wings spread out on high, and angelic faces turned to one another; and this was the mercy seat. “There I shall meet with thee,” said the Lord, “and from above the mercy seat between the cherubims, I shall make my will known to thee regarding the children of Israel.” These were the great angels which guarded the gate of Paradise, but now they stood at the door of mercy.

Also the Lord bade him make a table of acacia wood, covered with gold, and great vessels of gold, and cups, flagons and chalices; and upon the table were to be shown at all times loaves of unleavened bread: and a lamp of gold with seven branches, wrought about with apples of gold and golden almond blossoms and lily cups; and that lamp was to be kept ever burning in the holy place with pure oil of the olive brought by the children of Israel: and an altar of acacia overlaid with bronze for burnt-offerings, and an altar overlaid with gold for the sacrifice of incense.

For the ministry of His hallowed house the Lord bade Moses consecrate his brother Aaron and Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. Wise-hearted craftsmen were to make him holy garments that he should go in glory and beauty. His garments were a breastplate, an ephod, a robe, a brodered coat, a mitre and a girdle. The vestment ephod was woven of blue, scarlet, purple and fine linen yarn, with thread of gold running through it. It fastened on the shoulders

with gold clasps; and on the shoulders, set in gold filigree, were two onyx stones, engraved with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.

The breastplate was of the same stuff, a span square, doubled to form a wallet, and it was fastened with rings of gold. Upon it were twelve precious stones arranged in four rows. These were the stones; they were set in gold *cloisonné* and were engraved with the names of the children of Israel, reading from left to right :

LEVI (Emerald)	SIMEON (Topaz)	REUBEN (Carnelian)
NAPHTALI (Chalcedony)	DAN (Sapphire)	JUDAH (Indian Ruby)
ISSACHAR (Amethyst)	ASHER (Agate)	GAD (Hyacinth)
BENJAMIN (Jasper)	JOSEPH (Beryl)	ZEBULUN (Chrysolite)

Within the breastplate were laid the mysterious gems, the Urim and Thummim of the Lord. These and the names of the children of Israel Aaron wore upon his heart when he went in before Jehovah.

His robe was to be all of blue—the hem of it hung with pomegranates of blue, purple and scarlet, and a golden bell between pomegranate and pomegranate, so that the sound of his coming and going should be heard in the holy place. Of dark blue was his mitre to be, and fastened with a dark blue cord to the front of it, there was to be a plate of gold bearing the words, “Holiness to the Lord.” His coat was of fine linen, from throat to foot, and was worn innermost.

And the Lord communed with Moses of the consecration of Aaron and his sons and of many other things—of the sacrifice of incense in the dawn when the lamps were trimmed, of the sacrifice of a lamb in the morning and a lamb in the evening, of the numbering of the people and the ransom of their souls. He told him He had inspired Bezaleel, the son of Uri, the son of

Hur, with wisdom and knowledge and craftsmanship in all manner of work; and had chosen Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, to help him; and had put wisdom into all the wise-hearted to make all that He had commanded.

Then He gave Moses the tablets of testimony, the tablets of stone, written with the finger of God. He blessed him not, but said to him wrathfully, "Away, get thee down! Thy people, which thou hast brought out of Egypt, is corrupted. They have turned aside quickly from the way which I commanded them."

39. THE CALF OF GOLD.

WHEN the days went by and it appeared certain that Moses had perished in the darkness on the mountain, the people came crowding and clamouring around Aaron. "He who brought us out of Egypt," they said, "is gone; who knows what has happened to him? Do thou make us a god to lead us on our way."

If Aaron resisted them, or if he sought to check them by asking of them what they held most precious, it is not told, but he said to them, "Take the gold earrings your wives and sons and daughters are wearing, and bring them to me." All the people gave up those jewels; and Aaron, who had seen in Egypt how the sun in his might and the lights of heaven had been wrought into vain images, thought to give the glory of God a form of earthly splendour, and he melted the treasure, and cast with it a calf of gold.

The people rejoiced at the sight of it. "O Israel," they cried, "this is thy god who brought thee out of Egypt!" Aaron built an altar before it, and proclaimed a feast to Jehovah for the morrow. In the morning they came with burnt-offerings and peace-offerings; and when they had sacrificed, they sat down and feasted, and then rose up for merry-making.

Within the cloud upon the mountain the Lord heard the sound of their evil revelry, and He said wrathfully to Moses, "Away, get thee down! Thy people, which

thou hast brought out of Egypt, is corrupted. They have turned aside quickly from the way which I commanded them. They have made themselves a molten calf; they have worshipped it; they have said, 'This, Israel, is thy god which brought thee out of Egypt.' They are a stiff-necked people. Let me alone; mine anger grows hot against them, and I will destroy them; but of thee I will make a great nation."

But Moses supplicated the Lord on their behalf: "Why wilt thou let the Egyptians say, 'He led them forth, but it was to their undoing—to slay them in the mountains, to destroy them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Thy fierce wrath, and forego the ill Thou wouldst do Thy people. Remember Abraham, and Isaac, and Israel, Thy servants, to whom Thou didst swear by Thyself to multiply their children like the stars of heaven and to give them the land of Thy promise as a heritage for ever."

But the Lord God made no answer. Moses turned away, and coming out of the cloud and the fire, for the mountain was burning, he descended with the tablets of stone in his hand. In the deep ravine whose rocky walls hid the tents from his gaze, he heard the tumult of the people. Joshua said to him, "Hark! there is a noise of warfare in the camp." "No," Moses answered, "yon is not the shouting, nor the cry of men vanquished; it is the sound of people singing that we hear." Then, as they came in view of the tents and drew near them, they beheld the golden calf and the dancing.

The heart of Moses grew hot with anger. He threw down the stone tablets and broke them. To Aaron he said, "What has this people done to thee that thou hast suffered them to commit this grievous sin?" At the sight of their wild orgies—for if the revellers saw him they heeded him not, and at the thought that they were become a derision among their enemies, Moses cried aloud in the entrance of the camp, "Who is on the Lord's side? Hither to me!"

The sons of Levi hastened to his call, and stood

thronging about him. "Take your swords," he said, "in the name of the Lord, and slay Him this rout of evil-doers; sweep through the camp from gate to gate, and back from gate to gate; spare neither brother, nor comrade, nor neighbour. Consecrate yourselves this day to the Lord by sacrificing even son and brother, that He may bless you."

That way and this went the sons of Levi, cutting down the evil-doers. That day there fell about three thousand men of the tribes of Israel. And Moses took the calf, burnt it, broke it, ground it to dust, and scattering it in the brook of the mountain, made the people drink of it.

On the morrow he ascended once more into the mountain, saying, "It may be that I shall make an atonement for your sin." Forty days and forty nights he lay on the bare rocks before the Lord, interceding for Israel; and he neither ate bread nor drank water. "Oh, this people," he said, "have sinned greatly. Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive them—; if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written." The Lord answered, "It is he who hath sinned against me that I shall blot out of my book." Against Aaron too the Lord was so wrathful that He could have destroyed him, but Moses besought the Lord for him at the same time.

40. THE TENT OF THE LORD.

AFTER this Moses took the tent in which he had been used to pray to the Lord, and pitched it far outside the camp. He called it the tent of meeting, and when he went out to it, the people stood at their doors and looked after him until he had entered. Then the cloudy pillar descended and stood at the entrance of the tent, and the people at their doors bowed down and worshipped. The Lord talked with Moses face to face, as a man talks with his friend. And Moses went to and fro, but Joshua, the son of Nun, remained continually in the tent.

At length the Lord said to Moses, "Go up towards the land I have promised. An angel shall go before, for if I went for a moment in the midst of this stiff-necked people, I would consume them." The children of Israel mourned when they heard this, and put aside all their ornaments for sorrow. Moses besought the Lord for them, "Thou hast said that I have found grace in Thy sight; consider then that this nation is Thy people. If Thy presence goes not with us, let us not depart hence. What certain sign shall we have that I and Thy people have found favour with Thee? Is it not by Thy going with us, and by our being separate from all the peoples of the earth?" The Lord answered, "I will do as thou askest, for thou hast found grace in my eyes, and I know thee by thy name."

Then Moses said, "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory!"

"I will make all my goodness pass before thee," the Lord answered, "and I will proclaim my name before thee. But my face thou canst not see, for man cannot see it and live. Lo, here is a place near me. Thou shalt stand on the rock. When my glory shall pass by, I will put thee into a hollow of the rock and cover thee with my hand until I have passed thee. When I withdraw my hand, thou shalt look upon me gone by, but my face cannot be seen." He said moreover, "Cut two tablets of stone like the first, which thou hast broken. Be ready early. Come up into Sinai in the glimmer of the morning. No one shall come with thee; no man shall appear on all the mountain; let not even the sheep or the cattle graze near it."

Moses went up in the dawn with the tablets of stone. The Lord descended in the cloud, and stood beside him. The Lord passed before him, and proclaimed His name—"the Lord, Jehovah, God merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and faithfulness, who keepeth loving-kindness to a thousand generations, who forgiveth iniquity, rebellion, and sin, but who doth not hold the guilty for innocent,

and who visiteth the iniquity of the father upon the children, and upon the children's children unto the third and the fourth generation."

Moses hastened to bow down his head to the earth, and he said, "Lord, if I have found grace in Thine eyes, let the Lord go up in the midst of us, for it is a stiff-necked people; pardon our iniquities and our sins, and take us for Thy inheritance."

"Behold," the Lord replied, "I make a covenant. I shall work, in the sight of all thy people, such wonders as have been seen not in any land or in any nation. All the people round about thee shall behold the work of the Lord, and by thee I shall do terrible things. Be thou ware of alliances with the people of the land into which thou goest lest they prove a snare for thee. Nay, but overthrow their altars, break their images, cast down their idols. Thou shalt worship no other God."

Forty days and forty nights Moses was there with God, and ate not, neither drank; and on the tablets of stone he wrote, as the Lord bade him, the words of the covenant, the ten commandments. When he came down from the mountain with the tablets of stone, his face was bright with such a shining that Aaron and the children of Israel were afraid to approach him. He put a veil over his face and took it off only when he spoke to them and when he went into the tent of meeting to commune with the Lord.

All that the Lord had commanded him on the mountain he delivered to the people, and he told them how the Lord had said, "Let them bring me offerings of a willing heart, gold, silver and bronze, and make me a hallowed place to dwell in the midst of them." With all manner of treasure then, came the children of Israel, men and women. The men brought silver and bronze and acacia wood. All the women wise-hearted spun blue and purple, scarlet, fine linen, and goats'-hair. The rulers gave precious stones, spice and oil of crushed olives. Much more the people brought than was needed for the service which the Lord desired. Then wrought

Bezaleel in curious devices of metal and wood and stone, and Aholiab in subtle weaving and coloured tapestry, and every wise-hearted man whom God had inspired with cunning craftsmanship, smith and jeweller, carver and webster and embroiderer, and every skilful workman.

All the dwelling of the Lord, in the length and the breadth and the height of it, and in all that it contained, was full of the music of the sacred numbers, and it was like a mighty song changed from sound into form.* And through the chords of this music ran the shining voices of precious stones, of gold and silver and bronze, of woven colours.

The sum of the gold that was used was nine and twenty talents and seven hundred and thirty shekels; of the silver, a hundred talents and seventeen hundred seventy and five shekels; of the bronze but little short of seventy talents and one.† When all the work was finished and Moses saw that it had been fashioned as the Lord had commanded, he blessed the wise-hearted artificers.

On the first day of the second year the dwelling of the Lord was set up in the wilderness, and all things being arranged in their places, Moses lit the golden lamp which was to burn perpetually before the Lord.

Then the cloud covered this tent of meeting, and the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle; and Moses could not enter because of the cloud and the glory. In all the days of their wayfaring the children of Israel departed on their journey when the cloud went up from over the tent of the Lord. When the cloud went not up,

* "The sacred numbers 3, 4, 7, 10, their parts and multiples, dominate every detail of the fabric and its furniture." Hastings, *Dict. of the Bible*, vol. iv. p. 667.

† The following estimate of these metals and the value of the gold and silver appears in the *Student's Commentary*:—Gold (avoirdupois weight), 1 ton, 4 cwt. 2 qrs. 13 lbs. : silver, 4 tons, 4 cwt. 2 qrs. 20 lbs. : bronze, 2 tons, 19 cwts. 2 qrs. 11 lbs. The gold, if pure, would equal £175,075 13s. of our money, and the silver £38,034 15s. 10d.

there they sojourned, whether it were for two days, or a month, or a year, until it had ascended. Then the silver trumpets sounded through the camp, and the tents were struck.

The cloud of the Lord was on the tent by day; by night it was a glow of fire, in the sight of all the house of Israel. So it was through all their wayfaring.

41. THE LAST DAYS IN SINAI.

WHEN the dwelling of the Lord stood finished in its beauty, with all things within it hallowed, the princes of Israel, chiefs of the houses of their fathers, brought the offering of the twelve tribes to the tent of the Lord. There were six covered wagons and twelve oxen—two oxen to bear each wagon litter-wise; and these were for the service of the tabernacle during its wayfaring. Moses divided them among the Levites; two wagons and four oxen for the sons of Gershon, the son of Levi, who had charge of the rich hangings and the coverings of skin; four wagons and eight oxen for the sons of Merari, who had charge of the pillars and frame-work and blocks of silver and bronze; but to the sons of Kohath he gave none, they carried the precious vessels and furnishings slung on poles on their own shoulders.

The offerings for the altar were the same from each prince; on twelve days they were presented, each prince bringing his offering on his own day. These were their gifts: great dishes of silver, silver bowls, cups of gold filled with incense—twelve of each, one from each tribe; and the weight of the silver was two thousand four hundred shekels, and that of the gold a hundred shekels and twenty. For burnt-offerings they gave bullocks and rams and lambs, twelve of each; twelve shaggy goats for sin-offerings; and for thanksgiving, four and twenty bullocks, two from each tribe, and rams, goats and lambs, sixty of each, for each tribe five.

When Moses went into the tabernacle of the Lord, he heard the voice of one speaking to him from between

the cherubims on the mercy-seat, for now Jehovah had come down from the mountain to dwell amid His people; and Moses talked with Him.

In these days Aaron and his sons Nadab and Abihu were consecrated to the service of the Lord. On the first day after the week of consecration, Aaron offered a sin-offering and a burnt-offering and thank-offering, and the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people, for fire came from His presence and consumed to ashes the burnt-offering upon the altar. The people saw, and shouted for joy, and fell upon their faces. But Nadab and Abihu, perchance in vainglory or, it may be, in the foolishness of wine, strewed incense on the embers in their censers, and brought strange fire before the Lord, other fire than He had commanded. The Lord was wroth, and His lightnings flashed forth and slew them.

Moses said to his brother, "It was of this that the Lord gave His warning when He said, 'Let the priests be holy that come near me,'" but Aaron was silent. He and his sons Eleazar and Ithamar were forbidden to bewail their dead, being priests of the Lord and preachers of His righteousness, and Nadab and his brother were carried out of the camp and buried by their kinsmen. Then the Lord said to Aaron, "When thou and thy sons go into the tent of meeting, drink no wine or strong drink, lest you die."

While the children of Israel were yet in Sinai the Lord appointed many ordinances, and among them were these :

"When you are come into the land which I give you and shall reap your harvest, you shall bring a sheaf of the early barley to the priest, and he shall wave it from side to side before Jehovah, that it may be accepted as a wave-offering for you; and you shall bring for a burnt-offering a lamb and flour and oil and wine.

"On the fiftieth day thereafter, when seven sabbaths

have gone by, you shall offer bread of the new wheat, and a burnt-offering and drink-offerings, and a sin-offering and thank-offerings. And when you gather in the crops, you shall leave a corner of the field uncut, and you shall do no gleaning; leave these for the poor and the stranger.

“The first day of the seventh month you shall keep for a day of rest and holy assemblage, and proclaim with the blowing of trumpets all through the land.

“The tenth day of this seventh month shall be a day of atonement. You shall have a holy assembly, you shall humble your souls, and sacrifice with fire to the Lord. No work shall you do on that day; it is a day of expiation to Jehovah your God. Whoso shall work, and whoso shall not humble his heart shall be cut off from His people. So shall you do, you and your children, for ever, in whatsoever place you be.”

Now this was the manner of the expiation and atonement.

Two shaggy he-goats, alike in size and colour, were brought to the priest, and he presented them to the Lord at the entrance of the tent of meeting. There he cast lots for them; and one goat fell by lot to Jehovah, and one to Azazel, the evil spirit doomed to dwell in desolate places. Then the priest took the goat which fell to the lot of the Lord, and slew it as an expiation for the transgressions of the people; and with its blood he sprinkled the mercy-seat.

Now these two goats were meant to be truly but one; and the living goat represented the goat which was slain, yet was not dead. And the priest took the living goat—which was, as it were, the slain goat still alive—and presented it before the Lord. Upon its head he laid his two hands, and confessed over it the iniquities of the children of Israel and all the transgressions by which they had sinned. Upon its head he laid them all, and he sent the goat into the wilderness. Through the rocks and sands of the waste a man drove it before him, bearing the sins of the people back to

Azazel, the spirit of sin. Into the depths of the wilderness he drove it, into the desolate places, the wilds of the unknown, the tracts of oblivion, where it was lost and found no more, and with it the sins of Israel were clean gone for ever. So were their transgressions expiated by the blood of the slain, which was not dead, and borne away out of mind by the living, which had been slain.

“On the fourteenth day of this seventh month, when you have made the ingathering of the vine and the olive and the fruits of the land, you shall hold a feast to the Lord; and it shall begin with a sabbath and end with a sabbath. On the first day you shall take fruit of the fair trees, palm branches and sprays of tufted trees and willows of the brook, and for seven days you shall rejoice before Jehovah your God. This you shall do each year in the seventh month for ever. During the seven days you shall abide in lodges; all of Israel born shall abide in lodges that your children may know that I made the children of Israel abide in lodges after I brought them up out of the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.

“Six years shalt thou sow thy field and prune thy vine and garner the fruit of them; but all the seventh year they shall be at rest. It is the sabbath of the land. What groweth of itself thou shalt not gather; it shall be food for all—the bondman and the bondwoman, the stranger, the beast and the bird.

“In the seventh sabbath year, when seven times seven years have gone by, on the tenth day of the seventh month, on the day of atonement, when the transgressions of Israel have been borne away into the wilderness, let the trumpet cry jubilee through the land. You shall hallow the fiftieth year. You shall not sow in it; you shall not reap what groweth of itself. If you shall say, ‘What shall we eat, seeing that for two years we neither sow nor reap?’ behold, I will bestow my blessing upon you so that the sixth year shall provide for three years. You shall sow again in the eighth

year, but until you come to harvest in the ninth year, the old harvest shall be sufficient for you.

“In the year of jubilee thy brother who hath fallen into poverty and hath been sold to thee and hath served thee, he and his children shall go free and return to the possession of his fathers. So too shall it be with thy brother who hath fallen poor and sold himself to the stranger or the sojourner in the land; in this jubilee year he shall go free. For the children of Israel are my bondmen whom I brought out of the land of Egypt. And if thy brother hath fallen into poverty and cannot redeem the house or land which he hath sold, in this jubilee year it shall revert to him and be his own again. Yet if it be a dwelling in a walled city, it shall not revert to him; but the houses in unwallled villages shall be counted as parts of the fields. The land shall not be sold for ever; it is mine; you are strangers and sojourners within my gates.”

And in this wise the Lord declared His promises and His warnings to the children of Israel :

“If you will walk in my laws and keep my commandments, I will give you rain in due season, the land shall yield her increase and the trees of the field their fruit. You shall scarce have ceased threshing before it is vintage time, and the vintage shall last till seed time. You shall eat your bread in plenty; no one shall trouble your sleep. I will rid the land of evil beasts; and you shall chase your enemies—five of you a hundred, a hundred of you ten thousand. I shall walk in the midst of you; I shall be your God, and you shall be my people.

“But if you will not listen to me, if you despise my laws and break my covenant, I will send upon you terror and wasting and burning ague, which shall consume the eyes and wring hearts with sorrow. You shall be slain before your enemies; they that hate you shall reign over you. If for all this you will not listen to me, I will punish you seven times more. And if for all this

you will not be reformed, I will destroy your high places, and cut down your images, and cast your carcases upon the carcases of your idols. And I will scatter you among the heathen. You shall perish among the heathen, and they that are left of you shall pine away in your iniquity.

“And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly. But for their sake I will remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the heathen, that I might be their God. I am the Lord.”

And it was in this wise that the Lord bade Aaron and his sons to bless the children of Israel: “The Lord bless thee and keep thee! The Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious to thee! The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace!”

42. THE GRAVES OF GREED.

ON the first day of the second month of the second year—when a month had gone by since the tabernacle had been set up—the children of Israel were numbered at the bidding of the Lord. Moses and Aaron and the princes of the tribes numbered, according to their tribes, all the men from twenty years old and upwards, men fit for battle. The number of them was six hundred and three thousand, four hundred and fifty. But the tribe of Levi was numbered apart from them, for the Lord had chosen them for the service of His hallowed house instead of the first-born of Israel. Every man, from the man-child a month old and upward, was counted, and the number of the tribe of Levi was twenty-two thousand, two hundred, seventy and three.

These pitched their tents on the four sides of the tent of the Lord. Out beyond them, on the four sides, encamped the tribes under four standards, and each under the ensign of his father's house. Judah, Issachar and

Zebulun lay on the east under the standard of Judah; Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin on the west under the standard of Ephraim; Dan, Asher and Naphtali on the north under the standard of Dan; and Reuben, Simeon and Gad on the south under the standard of Reuben. And as they camped, so they marched, with the ark of Jehovah in the midst of their hosts.

On the twentieth day of this second month the wondrous cloud was lifted from the tabernacle; the trumpets were sounded, and the tents were struck for the long march to the land flowing with milk and honey. Then, by God's favour, the ark went out before them from the wilderness of Sinai to find them a resting-place; and for three days' journey the hosts of Israel followed, standard after standard, through valleys winding between granite mountains and across barren plains. The cloud accompanied them, and each time the ark was borne forward, Moses chanted, "Arise, O Lord, and let Thine enemies be scattered, and let the people that hate Thee flee before Thee!" and when it came to rest, "Return, O Lord, to the ten thousands of the thousands of Israel!"

Ever thankless and querulous, the people complained of the hardships of their wayfaring. The Lord was angered with their discontent, and He slew them with His lightnings on the outer edge of the camp, but the fire of His wrath was quenched by the intercession of Moses. This place was called Taberah, because of the lightnings which "burned" among the people.

The close of the three days' journey brought them to high land, a vast stony rise which overlooked the desert; the ark stopped; the cloud rested over it, and the people built themselves enclosures of rugged stone around their camps. Then the rabble began to murmur and to lust after the good cheer of Egypt. "Who will give us flesh to eat?" they asked, weeping. "We remember the fish we ate in Egypt, which cost us nothing, and the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, the garlic. Now our very soul is dried up

within us; we have nothing left at all. Only this manna is for ever before our eyes."

Moses heard them lamenting at the doors of their tents, and his heart sank. The Lord heard, and His anger grew hot. Moses said to Him, "Why dost Thou afflict Thy servant with this people? Are they my offspring that I must carry them in my bosom, as a father carries his nursling, into the land Thou hast sworn to give them? Where shall I find flesh for this host? The burden of this people is too heavy for me in my loneliness. Deal not thus with me, rather slay me straightway, and let me not see my wretchedness."

The Lord bade him bring into His presence seventy of the elders of Israel; and He blessed and inspired them to be his aids in the government of the people. And He commanded that the people should sanctify themselves, for on the morrow they should have flesh—not for one day, nor ten, nor twenty, but until they loathed it. Moses said, "Six hundred thousand men on foot are the people about me; shall the flocks and herds be slain to suffice them? shall all the fish in the sea be netted together to give them enough?" The Lord answered, "Is the hand of Jehovah grown short? Thou shalt see now whether or not my word to thee shall come to pass."

The Lord called a wind up from the sea, and it blew quails in, and carried them, flying low and weary, over the camp and about a day's journey on either side of it. All that day, all that night, all the next day the people beat down the quails and gathered and dried them. Then, when the flesh was between their teeth and they had not yet eaten, the Lord smote them with deadly plague. They who had lusted for the savoury meats of Egypt were carried out of the camp and the stones of darkness were heaped over them. The name of that place was Kibroth-hattaavah, "the graves of greed."

From the Graves of Greed the people went on to Hazeroth. There within the stone circles of their enclosures they dwelt in a broad sandy valley winding



Moses striking the Rock.

between great terraced walls, fantastic rocks and crowding peaks of brilliantly weathered sandstone, bare greenstone hills, and masses of rose-red granite. In the midst, under a high cliff the palms of the oasis made a dark green shade around a living spring.

And Miriam and Aaron talked with Moses, belittling him on account of the Ethiop woman he had married (for he had taken an Ethiop wife). "Is it only by Moses that Jehovah speaks?" they asked. "Does He not speak also by us?" Now Moses was very patient, meeker than any man in the world, and he was silent. But the Lord heard them, and He said on a sudden to Moses, Aaron and Miriam, "Go, you three, to the tent of meeting." And they went all three.

The Lord descended in the pillar of cloud; He stood in the entrance of the tent. He spoke to Aaron and Miriam, "Give to my words good heed! When there shall be a prophet among you, it is in a vision that I, the Lord, shall reveal myself to him; I shall speak to him in a dream. It is not thus with Moses my servant. In all my house he is the faithful. I speak to him mouth to mouth; I reveal myself to him without darkness of speech; he beholds a similitude of Jehovah. How then were you not afraid to rail against my servant Moses?"

The indignation of the Lord was kindled against them. He departed. The cloud disappeared from above the tent. And lo! Miriam was stricken with leprosy, white as snow. Aaron, gazing, saw she was a leper. And he said to Moses, "For pity's sake, my lord, lay not upon us the penalty of the sin committed in our folly. Oh, let her be not wasted away like a babe which is born yet is not living."

Moses cried aloud to the Lord, "O God, I beseech thee to heal her." The Lord answered, "If it was but her father who spat in her face, would she not be an object of shame for seven days? For seven days let her be shut out from the camp; thereafter she shall be received again."

For seven days she was shut out, and the people

did not remove until she had come back to them. Then they departed with their flocks and herds from the stone circles of that wildly beautiful valley.

43. THE DOOM OF THE CRAVENS.

FOR many days they journeyed slowly through the great and terrible wilderness; but nothing is told of their wayfaring save what they themselves preserved in the names which they gave to the places wherein they spread their tents.

The broom was flowering in Rithmah; in Rimmon-parez there was a cleft filled with pomegranate bushes; Libnah made the eyes ache with the glaring whiteness of its rocks. In Rissah they marvelled at the heap of ruins. At Kehelathah, did they not meet in some solemn assembly before the tent of the Lord? The beauty of Mount Shapher filled them with gladness; but no legend tells what made Haradah a place of terror.

Again they were gathered together in Makheloth; in Tahath they were bowed down with humbleness of spirit, and in Tarah the burden of their wandering was heavy upon them. Yet at Mithcah they were solaced with sweet waters, at Hashmonah with the fruitfulness of the summer. In a little while they gazed on the dark blue of the sea, and rested on the beach at Ebronah before they encamped under the mountain ridge which gave Ezion-geber its name, "the giant's spine."

From Ezion-geber they passed into the vast desert of Paran. Over the white gravel and black flints and thorny scrub of its rolling terraces they faced towards distant hills, which rose like white tents. Then, suddenly, out of the dazzle of the white desert they came upon the running waters, the grass, the fig-trees, the corn-fields, the shrubs and wild flowers of the oasis of Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin. Beyond lay the South Country and the land of the promise.

It was theirs to take; but not without the valour of a great heart, for already the Canaanites were massing

their forces on the plain between the western sea and the mountains. Twelve chiefs were chosen from the tribes of Israel to explore the land, its cities, strongholds and approaches, and to bring back tidings of its fruitfulness and the character of its inhabitants.

Joshua the warrior and Caleb of the tribe of Judah were among the chiefs. They went up by the mountain tracks through the South Country, and explored all the eastern regions as far as Rehob near the springs of Jordan and within the snow-shine of Hermon. Returning through the heart of the land, they came to Hebron of many memories. Three of the giant tribes of the Anakim dwelt there. In the green strath of Eshcol brook, they gathered a show of the rich produce of the country—pomegranates and figs and one prodigious cluster of grapes which two of them carried on a staff between them.

Forty days after their setting-out they returned to Kadesh, and the people marvelled at the fruit they had brought. "True it is, and no lie," said the spies, "the land flows with milk and honey. But the men are a mighty folk; cities they have, all walled about, and very great; and we saw the sons of Anak there. The Amalekites are in the South Country; the sons of Heth, the Jebusites, and the Amorites are on the mountains; the Canaanites dwell beside the sea and along Jordan river." The people began to clamour with discontent and alarm, but Caleb silenced them. "Up!" he cried; "let us lay hold of this land; we are well able to do it."

But the spies who had gone with him broke in, "We cannot face these people; they are stronger than we"; and they decried the country, "'Tis a land that eats up its folk with raids and forays; tall and stark were all the folk we saw; and there we saw the giants, the brood of Anak, giants of a race of giants. In our own eyes we were like grasshoppers, and so we were in theirs."

The great gathering dispersed with wild cries. That night there was weeping in the tents; and the

people arose murmuring against their leaders. Moses strove to embolden them. "Fear neither giants, nor walled cities!" he cried. "The Lord your God, who goes before you, will Himself fight for you." They would not listen to him. "Oh, that we had died in Egypt!" they said; "Oh, that we were dead here in the desert! Why has Jehovah sent us into this land, where we shall fall by the sword, and our wives and children will be made a spoil? Were it not better to go back into Egypt?" And they said to one another, "Let us choose a captain to lead us, and return to Egypt."

There, in sight of them all, Moses and Aaron turned away, and cast themselves on their faces before the tent of the Lord. Joshua and Caleb rent their garments in dismay. And they spoke to the people. "Goodly beyond compare was the land through which we passed. If the Lord is well pleased with us He will lead us thither; He will give it to us, a land flowing with milk and honey. Take heed how you rebel against Him. As for the folk of the land, fear them not. We shall devour them; no Jehovah overshadows them; the Lord is with us."

Suddenly, as the people cried out in tumult, "Stone them, stone them!" the glory of the Lord shone out before them in the tent of meeting.

And the Lord said to Moses, "How long will this people provoke me? How long will they not believe in me, despite the wonders I have displayed amongst them? I will smite them with plague, I will disinherit them; but I will make of thee a greater and mightier nation." In hurried words Moses answered, "Egypt will hear of it. They will tell the folk of this land. These know of Thee—that Thou art in the midst of this people, that Thou art seen face to face—Thou, the Lord; that Thou goest before them, a pillar of cloud by day, a pillar of fire at night. If Thou slayest this people like one man, the nations will say, 'Jehovah could not bring them into the land He promised them; so He

slew them in the wilderness.' Oh, forgive, I beseech Thee, the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of Thy mercy—as Thou hast forgiven them from the days of Egypt until this day.”

The Lord answered, “ I forgive them, even as thou hast besought me. But as truly as I live, of all those who have seen my glory and the marvels I wrought in Egypt and in the wilderness, who have now tempted me ten times, who have disobeyed my commands, none shall see the country I promised to their fathers. Say this to them, ‘ Your corpses shall fall in this desert. All you who were numbered from twenty years and upward, and have murmured against me, you shall not enter the land I promised, save Caleb, son of Jephunneh, and Joshua, son of Nun. But your little ones, who you said would fall a spoil, them I shall take in and they shall know the land you have despised. Forty years you shall roam the desert till your corpses are wasted away. Now the Amalekites and Canaanites are dwelling in the valley; turn, therefore, and get you into the wilderness towards the Red Sea.”

The spies who had cried down the land and disheartened the people were stricken with the plague; Joshua and Caleb alone were left alive. The people, when they heard their doom, mourned in great affliction.

Then they who quaked with fear when the Lord was on their side vaunted in the foolhardiness of their own perversity, “ We will away and master the land the Lord has promised us. We will redeem our sin.” Moses said to them, “ Why do you transgress the Lord’s command? But it will not prosper. The Lord is not among you. The Amalekites and Canaanites are there before you, and you will fall by the sword.” But in the pride of their heart they went up to the hill-tops at dawn. The ark of the Lord did not go out with them, and Moses stayed in the camp. And Amalek came down upon them; the Canaanites of the mountain fell upon them; they slew them, they routed them, they drove them as far as Hormah.

44. KORAH, DATHAN AND ABIRAM.

No great while after this Korah the Levite, and Dathan, Abiram and On of the tribe of Reuben rose in mutiny against Moses; and with them were two hundred and fifty of the princes of Israel, men of renown. "We have had enough of you," they said to Moses and Aaron. "Not you alone, but all the children of Israel are holy, and Jehovah is in the midst of them. Why then do you set yourselves above the people of the Lord?"

Moses, when he heard them, prostrated himself in prayer; then he arose and said to Korah and his crew, "To-morrow the Lord will show who is His and who is holy. Take your censers, Korah, and all your faction; put fire in them and incense, and come before the Lord. That man will be holy whom He chooses. And you, children of Levi, is it such a little thing that the God of Israel has taken you out of all this people for service in His tent? You and your brethren of the sons of Levi He has brought close to Him—and now you must have the high-priesthood too? For that is why thou, Korah, and thy faction are risen against the Lord; against the Lord, for who is Aaron that you murmur against but His own high-priest?"

Moses sent for Dathan and Abiram. "We shall not go to thee," they answered. "Is it not enough that thou hast brought us out of a land flowing with milk and honey to our death in the desert, but thou must lord it over us? It is into no land of milk and honey that thou hast led us; it is not fields and vineyards thou hast given us for an inheritance. Dost thou think to put a glamour on the eyes of these men? We shall not go to thee."

On the morrow they kindled their censers and strewed the fire with incense. Two hundred and fifty censers there were and a great smoke of fragrance as these princes of Israel stood with Moses and Aaron at the entrance of the tabernacle. Korah called a meeting

of all the children of Israel against Moses and Aaron before the tent of the Lord. And the glory of the Lord appeared to all who were there.

Then the Lord said to Moses, and Aaron, "Away out of the midst of this assembly, and I will consume them in an instant." But Moses and Aaron fell on their faces and said, "O God, God of the spirits of all flesh, one man sins, and wilt Thou be wroth with the whole people?" The Lord said, "Speak to the assembly; bid them withdraw on all sides, far from the tents of Korah and Dathan and Abiram." On all sides the people drew back. Dathan and Abiram came forth, and stood scornfully at the entrance of their tents, with their wives and their sons and little children.

Moses said, "By this sign you shall know that the Lord has sent me to do all these things, and that they are not of my wit's work. If these men die the common death of men, it is not the Lord who has sent me; but if the Lord does an unheard of thing, if the earth opens her mouth to swallow them, if they go down living into Sheol, then shall you know that these men despised the Lord."

As he ceased speaking, the earth gaped beneath them; it swallowed them and their tents, and all the household of Korah, and all their possessions. They went down living into the pit. The earth covered them. They vanished from the midst of the multitude. At their cry Israel fled in terror, "Away, away, lest the earth swallow us."

Then the Lord sent forth His lightnings, and the princes of Israel, the men of renown—two hundred and fifty they were—perished in that burning. The coals of their censers were scattered in the wilds; the censers were beaten into plates of bronze for the altar of burnt-offerings, a thing to remember in Israel.

Came on the morrow the multitude of the people, stormy and rebellious. "Ye have killed the Lord's people," they cried; and as they crowded around, the cloud descended on the tent of meeting and the splendour

of the Lord shone forth. Moses and Aaron hurried to the tent, and once again the Lord said to them, "Get you out of this assembly, and quickly I will destroy them." But these two fell on their faces before Him.

Moses said to Aaron, "Up! fill thy censer with coals from the altar, put incense in it; haste thee to the people and offer an expiation for them. The wrath of the Lord has gone forth. The plague is begun." And Aaron ran with his censer into the midst of the multitude. The plague had begun; the stricken were falling dead around him. He cast incense upon the burning coals; he offered it in atonement for the people. He stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed.

In that pestilence fourteen thousand and seven hundred of the children of Israel were destroyed.

Then the Lord said, "I will make an end of these jealous murmurings of the children of Israel"; and He bade Moses gather together the rods of power borne by the princes of Israel. Upon the rod of each he wrote the name of the prince, the head of the house of his father, and upon the rod of the house of Levi he wrote, as the Lord commanded him, the name of Aaron. There were twelve rods. "And thou shalt lay them," said the Lord, "before the ark of the tablets of stone in the tabernacle, and the rod of him whom I choose for my priest shall blossom."

Moses did so, and on the morrow, when they came to the tent of meeting, lo, the rod of Aaron was in bud, had broken into blossom, bore ripe almonds. Moses brought the rods out to the people, and the princes gazed in wonder, and took each his own rod.

45. THE SIN OF MOSES.

THE years went by with the children of Israel, and them wandering in the wilderness from water to water and from tree to tree. The years went by—ten, twenty, thirty and eight—until well-nigh all that generation

which had seen the glory of the Lord and the marvels wrought in Egypt had fallen in the wilderness and their corpses wasted away. And in the first month of the fortieth year the whole of the people came again into the desert of Zin, and abode in Kadesh.

There Miriam died, and she was buried there; and the song of triumph and the dance of timbrels on the sea shore was already a legend of old time.

The wells failed in Kadesh, and there was a drought. The new generation rose up like the old, murmuring against their leaders and lamenting, "Would that we had died when our brethren perished at the hand of the Lord! Why have you brought the Lord's people into this desert to perish, we and our flocks? Why did you make us come out of Egypt into this evil place? It is no place to sow in; there are no vines, no figs, no pomegranates, no water to drink."

Once again Moses and his brother prostrated themselves in the tent of Jehovah; and the Lord said to Moses, "Take thy rod from the tabernacle, call an assembly, thou and Aaron; and before the eyes of them all speak to the rock in Kadesh, and it will give forth its waters." But when he came into the assembly, Moses, fretted and overborne, turned with flashing eyes on the multitude; and (whether it was that he said within himself, "Will God work a wonder for this mutinous race?" or whether in his anger he resented God's goodness to them) he spoke in grievous haste, "Give ear, rebels! Is it from this rock that we are to bring you forth water?" And he did not speak to the rock, but smote it with the rod, and again smote it. A bitter evil the perversity of the people brought upon him. From the rock the water poured abundantly; the people drank of it, and their flocks and herds; but the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe in me so as to glorify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, you shall not lead this people into the land which I have given them."

These were called the Waters of Meribah, which is

“contention,” where the children of Israel contended with the Lord.

Perehance it was in these days, when the burden of Israel lay heavy upon him, when the discouragement of age perturbed for a moment the steadfast mind, when he himself had displeased God, that Moses sang that ancient song of faith which men of old time remembered as his :

“ Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place
In all generations.”

The vision of life fleeting, of the flowering grass of the morning withered before eventide, the vision of sin and of God’s swift judgments overcame him. All the high-heart and adventure of youth showed themselves to be emptiness and toil, and in a twinkling the years of a man were done. In the might and mercy of God alone was there refuge and peace.

“ Return, O Lord ! How long till Thy return ?
And let it repent Thee concerning Thy servants.”

46. THE END OF THE WANDERINGS.

IN the fortieth year, when the term of their wanderings was drawing to an end, the people prepared once more to seek the land of the promise. Moses sent messengers to the king of Edom, saying, “ Thou knowest what travail has long been our lot ; suffer thy brother Israel to pass through thy kingdom to Jordan.” But the son of the wild hunter race of Esau refused him, and came out in arms to drive him from his borders. So the people journeyed to the rugged coasts of Seir.

Mount Hor towered up before them, with its mighty red peaks, into the blue heavens, and the Lord said to Moses, “ Get thee up into the mountain and take Aaron and Eleazar his son with thee. There shall Aaron be gathered to his people, because of your disobedience at the water of Meribah.” The eyes of all Israel followed them as they went up. From the summit of the

mountain Aaron looked across the white desert and gazed on the blue hills beyond Hebron, the land he was not to enter.

As the Lord had commanded, Moses took from him the rich garments of the high-priest, and arrayed his son Eleazar in them. Aaron died upon the mountain. It was on the first day of the fifth month, and he was one hundred and twenty-three years old. There they buried him, and for thirty days the children of Israel mourned for him.

Then they journeyed southward; saw once more Ezion-geber and the sea, and turning the borders of Edom, went up through the eastern desert, barren, burning, swept with sand-storms. Again Moses heard the ancient lamentation, "Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread; there is no water; we loathe this wretched manna." The Lord plagued them with serpents, fiery-red, which sprang upon them and bit them, so that many died. They came weeping to Moses, "We have sinned against the Lord and thee. Pray to the Lord for us, to take away the serpents." Jehovah answered the prayer of Moses, and bade him make a fiery-red serpent of bronze; and he raised it high on a banner staff, and all who were bitten gazed upon it, and were healed.

Through the wilds they journeyed east of Moab and crossed the brook of Zared, and among those who crossed the brook there was not left one of the fighting-men who came out of Egypt, save Joshua and Caleb. And they passed over the green valley of Arnon rushing down to the Dead Sea between Moab and the Amorites.

Thence to Beer, where the Lord bade them sink a well for water. For joy of the water they sang this song :

" Spring, Well ! Sing in its honour ;
Well, which the princes have sunken,
Well, which the chiefs of the people,
The sceptre-bearers have sunken ! "

Thence to the Brook of God and the high-places of Baal, and the top of Pisgah, whence they looked over the heavy blue waters of the Dead Sea into the land to which they were faring.

The wady of Heshbon wound down to the fruitful banks of Jordan, and Moses sent messengers to Sihon, king of Heshbon, praying, "Give us passage in peace through thy borders." But Sihon came out against him in war-array with his people, encountered him at Jahaz, and was utterly routed. From Aroer on the brink of Arnon to Gilead Israel took every city, left in them neither man nor child, and carried off the spoil.

Those who escaped fled to Bashan, and Og, king of Bashan, took the field at Edrei. He too was broken and his people were slain. Israel captured his oak forests and pastures and herds of wild cattle. They tumbled his high-walled cities down, three-score cities, cities of giants, with lofty stone doors for the proud heads of giants; and they spared neither woman nor child under the ban of the Lord. All the land east of Jordan from Arnon to Hermon was theirs. Og, king of Bashan, was alone left of the race of giants. His bed of black basalt was in Rabbath, among the children of Ammon. Nine cubits long it was, and the breadth of it was four cubits.

Israel went down into the plains of Moab between the mountains and Jordan over against Jericho, and their huge camp was spread between Beth-Jesimoth and Abel-Shittim, "the house of desolation" and "the meadow of acacias."

The people had gone up in peace between the borders of Moab and Ammon, for the Lord had said, "Leave them alone; their land I will not give you, it is the land I have given to the children of Lot." But Balak, the king of Moab, was in dread when he saw how they had swept the Amorites out of the earth. "This multitude," he said to the princes, the elders of Midian and Moab, "is an ox, and we are the grass of the field which it licks up." So he sent them with presents to Balaam,

son of Beor, at Pethor by the great river Euphrates, and with this message: "Here is a people come out of Egypt. They cover the face of the earth. Their camp is over against Moab. They are too mighty for me. Come, I pray thee, and curse me this people; so perchance I shall drive them out; for I know that he whom thou dost bless is blest, and he is cursed whom thou dost curse."

Now Balaam was in some sort a worshipper of Jehovah and a prophet. "Abide here this night," he said to the princes, "and I will answer as the Lord speaks to me." In the night God said to him, "Thou shalt not go to Moab; thou shalt not curse this people, for they are blessed." In the morning, therefore, he sent the princes away; but Balak sent more and greater nobles to him. "Let nothing hinder thee from coming," he said; "I can raise thee to high honours; it is but to ask and have. Come and curse me this people." "Though Balak should give me his house filled with gold and silver," Balaam answered, "nought could I do, little or great, against the word of the Lord my God. Yet abide this night, and I shall know what more the Lord shall say."

The Lord spoke to him in the night, "Since these men have come for thee, go with them; yet thou shalt do nought but what I shall say." So Balaam rose early, and mounting his she-ass set out with the princes of Moab. God was wroth because he contended with His will; and as he rode on, with his two servants running beside him, the angel of the Lord stood armed in the way. The she-ass saw the angel standing with a naked sword in his hand, and turned off the road into the fields, and Balaam beat her with his staff to bring her back.

Then the angel stood in a lane between the vineyards, and on either side there was a wall. The she-ass saw the angel and rushed against the wall and crushed Balaam's foot. Again Balaam struck her. The angel went further on, and stood in a place where there was

no room to turn, right or left. The she-ass saw him, and fell down under Balaam. He was mad with her, and beat her with his staff. But the Lord put speech into her mouth, and she said, "Why hast thou beaten me thrice?" "Thou hast made a mock of me," said Balaam; "if I had a sword in my hand, I would kill thee." "Am I not thy she-ass which thou hast ridden to this day?" she asked; "Am I always doing like this?" And Balaam answered, "No."

Then the Lord opened his eyes, and he saw the angel with the naked sword in his hand, and fell on his face before him. "I came out armed against thee," said the angel, "for thou art gone astray headlong. Three times the ass saw me and turned aside or I should have slain thee, and left her living." "I have sinned," Balaam said, "for I knew not that thou wert standing against me in the way. Now if my going displeases thee I will turn back." The angel answered, "Go with those men (since thou art bent on going), but thou shalt utter only the words that I shall give thee." And Balaam, who coveted the wages of unrighteousness, went with the princes of Moab.

The king met him on the borders of Moab. "Why didst thou not come?" he said. "Can I not raise thee to honour?" "Now that I am come," said Balaam, "have I leave to say this or that? I shall speak but the words the Lord puts into my mouth."

Balak took him up into the high-places of Baal (Bamoth-Baal), whence they looked down upon a portion of the tents of Israel. Balaam bade him build seven altars, and they sacrificed seven bulls and seven rams, on every altar a bull and a ram. As the smoke went up into the heavens, Balaam said to the king, "Stay here by thy burnt-offering, and I will go to a distance. Perchance the Lord will come to meet me, and what He reveals I will tell thee."

God met him on the heights and put words into his mouth. He returned to the king standing with the princes of Moab beside the altar, and delivered this oracle:

“Balak the king has brought me down from Aram,
Balak of Moab has brought me from the highlands of the East :
‘Come, curse me Jacob !
Come in wrath against Israel !’

How shall I curse whom God has not cursed ?
How be wroth with whom the Lord is not wrathful ?
From the top of the rocks I see him,
From the height of the hills I behold him.
’Tis a people that dwelleth apart,
Nor reckoneth itself among nations.

Who can count the dust of Jacob,
Or number the fourth part of Israel ?
Let me die the death of the righteous,
And let my end be like his.”

Balak said to him, “I took thee to curse my enemies,
and thou hast blessed them.” “Shall I not take heed,”
he answered, “to speak what the Lord has put into my
mouth ?” “Come thou with me,” said the king, “to
another place. Thence thou shalt see the outer edge
of them. Curse me them from that place.”

He took him up to the Field of the Watchers, on the
top of Pisgah. Again seven altars were built, and seven
bulls and rams were sacrificed ; and again the Lord put
words into Balaam’s mouth, and he spoke this oracle :

“Arise, Balak, and listen !
Hearken to me, son of Zippor !
God is not a man, that He should lie ;
Nor a son of man, that He should change.
What He hath said, shall He not do ?
What He hath declared, shall He not make good ?

Behold, I have received the word to bless.
He has blessed, and I shall not reverse it.
He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob,
He has not seen perverseness in Israel ;
The Lord his God is with him ;
The Lord is his King, the sound of jubilee trumpets is
with him.”

“If thou wilt not curse them,” cried the king, “at
least do not bless them.” “Did I not tell thee,” said
Balaam, “that I would do all that the Lord said ?”

“Come, then,” Balak said, “I will take thee to another place. Perchance the Lord will see good to let thee curse them from there.”

The king took him up to the summit of Peor, which looks out into the waste, the wide valley of Jeshimon, “the house of desolation.” Yet once more seven altars were built and a holocaust of seven bulls and seven rams was offered. But Balaam went not out as he had done on the other heights. He saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel. He turned his face to Jeshimon; he saw Israel encamped in tribal array. The spirit of God came upon him, and he spoke this oracle before Balak and the princes :

“The word of Balaam, son of Beor,
The word of the man whose eyes are open,
The word of him who hears the words of God,
Of him who sees the vision of the Almighty,
Of him who prostrates himself, and whose eyes are open.

How fair are thy tents, O Jacob,
Thy dwellings, O Israel !
I see them in the days to come—their valleys wide-spreading,
Their gardens by the river-side,
Their trees of spice aloes which the Lord has planted,
Their cedars beside the running of waters !
The water-wheel pours from its pitchers,
The seed is sown in plentiful rains.

Israel's king shall tower over Amalek's,
Mighty shall his kingdom be.
God brought him forth out of Egypt,
He hath the fleet strength of the aurochs ;
He eats up the nations which rise against him,
He breaks their bones ; he levels them with his arrows.
He couches ; he lies down like a lion and a lioness ;
Who shall stir him up ?
Blessed be he that blesseth thee,
And cursed be he that curseth thee ! ”

The anger of the king flamed out against Balaam ; he beat his hands together, and cried, “I called thee to curse me my enemies ; three times thou hast blessed them. Flee now, get thee home ! I thought to raise thee to great honour, but the Lord has withheld thee

from honour." "And did I not tell thy envoys," replied Balaam, "that were the king to give me his house full of gold and silver, yet would I speak only as the Lord gave me to speak? Now I get me to my own land, but ere I go I foretell thee what this people shall do to thy people in the days after these.

"The word of Balaam, son of Beor,
The word of the man whose eyes are open,
The word of him who hears the words of God,
Of him who sees the vision of the Almighty,
Of him who prostrates him and whose eyes are open.
I see him, but not now;
I behold him, but not nigh.
There comes a star out of Jacob,
A sceptre arises out of Israel.
He pierces the sides of Moab,
He beats down the sons of tumult.
He masters Edom,
He masters Seir, his enemies.
Israel shows forth his might.
A king he reigns who comes out of Jacob;
He cuts off the remnant that flee from the cities."

And Balaam departed and returned to his own land.

47. THE DEATH OF MOSES.

WHILE the tribes still dwelt in the Meadow of Acacias, the people went astray and worshipped Baal in the high-places of Peor; and they feasted with the women of Moab and Midian on the meats offered to their lifeless idols. The Lord in His anger smote them with plague. The judges slew the guilty and hung their bodies in the sun, but four and twenty thousand perished before the plague was stayed.

Then the Lord bade Moses number the people for the second time, from twenty years old and upwards, men fit to bear arms. Six hundred and one thousand, seven hundred and thirty was the strength of Israel, and among them, save for Caleb and Joshua, there was not one of those who had been numbered in Sinai. They were all dead in the wilderness.

The Lord then said to Moses, "Avenge me the children of Israel on Midian." A thousand fighting men from each tribe went out to war. They destroyed Midian. They slew the five kings and Balaam the soothsayer. They burnt the villages in their stone circles, and carried off immense spoil—all the women and their little ones, flocks and herds, raiment, gold and silver, bronze and tin and lead.

When the children of Reuben and Gad saw that the land of Jazer and the land of Gilead were a region goodly for cattle—and they had a very great multitude—they besought Moses to give them that country. "We will build folds and enclosures for our beasts, and walled towns for our wives and little ones, but we ourselves will pass over Jordan with you, every man armed for war. There shall be no returning until every son of Israel shall have come into his inheritance." The Lord accepted their pledge; and to Reuben, Gad and half of the tribe of Manasseh Moses gave all the land from the brink of Arnon to the foot of Hermon, the kingdoms of Sihon and Og.

When the fortieth year was drawing to a close Moses spoke to the children of Israel, and delivered to them a book in which he had recorded all that the Lord their God had done for them and all His commandments. "O Israel," he said, "ask of the days that are passed, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and from one end of heaven to the other—was there ever so great a thing as this the Lord's dealing with thee, or has there been a thing heard like it? Was there ever god which sought to take to himself a nation from the midst of a nation by trials and wonders and miracles and battles, by the arm of might and the outstretched arm, and with prodigies of terror, as the Lord thy God has done for thee in Egypt and before thine eyes? Know, therefore, and lay it to thy heart, that the Lord is God, on high in heaven and below in the earth. There is none else."

And he said to them, "These commandments which

I give thee this day shall be in thy heart. Thou shalt teach them to thy children; thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou art wayfaring; when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. Thou shalt bind them for a token on thy hands, they shall be as frontlets between thy eyes. Thou shalt write them on the door-posts of thy house and on thy city gates."

He also said, "When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land and shall have routed the nations before thee, thou shalt destroy them utterly. Thou shalt make no covenant with them, but shalt overturn their altars, break their statues, cast down their idols, burn their sculptured images. Thou shalt not touch the silver or the gold that is on them, lest these things should ensnare thee."

"This day," he said, "I set before thee a blessing, and a curse. If thou obey the voice of the Lord thy God and keep His commandments, blessed shalt thou be, in city and in field; blessed in thy children, and in the fruit of thy land, and in the increase of thy cattle and thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. Blessed shalt thou be in thy coming in, and blessed in thy going out. But if thou obey not the voice of the Lord thy God, cursed shalt thou be in city and in field. Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. Cursed shalt thou be in thy children, in the fruit of thy land, and in the increase of thy cattle and sheep. Cursed shalt thou be in thy coming in, and cursed in thy going out."

Moses gave the book which he had written to the priests and the princes of Israel and it was laid up in the ark with the tablets of stone. "Every seventh year," he said, "in the sabbath year, at the feast of green lodges, when the men of Israel appear before the Lord in His holy place, you shall gather together the people, men and women and children, and the strangers among you, and in sight of them all you shall read the commandments of the Lord your God."

On a day after this the Lord said to Moses, "Behold,

the time draws near when thou must die. Call Joshua then, and present yourselves at the tent of meeting. I will give him my commands." So these two went to the tent; and the Lord appeared in a pillar of cloud, and the pillar of cloud stood in the entrance of the tent. The Lord gave His commands to Joshua, son of Nun, and said to him, "Be strong and take courage! It is thou who shalt lead the children of Israel into the land which I have sworn to give them; and I myself shall be with thee."

The last time Moses stood before the assembled people of Israel, he spoke to them in a sounding song, and in a song he blessed the children of their houses. "Take to your hearts," he said, "all that I have told you this day, and see to it that your children keep and obey all the words of this law. It is not a vain thing for you; it is your life."

That same day the Lord bade him ascend into the mountain.

Moses went up from the plains by Jordan into the mountain of Nebo, the god of the heathen, to the top of Pisgah. A rose-red mountain it is among the white and rose-red mountains of Abarim. As he ascended the red anemones and blue irises were in flower among the rocks, but he saw them not. In the ravines the cuckoo was calling, but he did not hear it.

From the top of Pisgah the Lord showed him all the land of Gilead, to Hermon crowned with the snow and Lebanon clothed with the cedars; and all the land of Naphtali; and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh; and all the land of Judah to the Great Sea whose three waves are never at rest on that long shore; and the South Country; and the plain of Jericho, the city of palm-trees, as far as Zoar, where the Dead Sea ends, and there the flamingos were flying.

The Lord said to him, "That is the land which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, 'To thy children I will give it.' I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes; but thou shalt not enter it."

Moses the servant of God died there, in the land of Moab. The Lord buried him in a valley, opposite to Beth-peor. No man knows of his sepulchre to this day.

So died he whom the daughter of kings took a weeping babe out of the water, whom God knew face to face in the cloud and in the fire upon the mountain, who wrought wonders of might and terror in the sight of Israel. He was one hundred and twenty years old when he died; his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. Thirty days the children of Israel wept for him in the plains of Moab. There appeared afterwards in Israel no prophet like to him.

48. THE CAPTAIN OF THE HOST.

WHEN all these days were yesterdays, the Lord said to Joshua, "Moses my servant is dead. Therefore do thou go over Jordan with all this people into the land which I give them—all the land of the sons of Heth, from the wilderness and yonder Lebanon to Euphrates, the great river, and away to the Great Sea, towards the sundown. What I have been to Moses that will I be to thee. I will not fail thee nor forsake thee. Only be thou strong, and of good courage."

Joshua sent out two young men as spies. They explored the country round Jericho, entered the city on the edge of dusk, came to the house of Rahab, a votaress of the evil gods of Heth, and lodged there. Rahab took them up to the flat roof of the house, and said in a low voice, "Here you will be well bestowed. I know that Jehovah has given you this country. Dread of you has fallen upon us, and all the folk of the land are in an ague-fit, for we have heard how you were brought out of Egypt through the sea, and how you dealt with the kings of the Amorites. All our courage has gone out of us, for it is Jehovah, your God, who is God on high in heaven and beneath on earth. Now, I beseech you, swear to me by the Lord that you will be as good

to my father's house as I have been to you. Pledge me that you will save my father and mother, my brothers and sisters and all their household, and that you will spare our lives." "We will stand by you to the death," the spies answered, "if you will keep our secret. And when the Lord gives us the land, we shall be good and true to you."

Now the king had heard of their coming, and he sent soldiers to seize them; but Rahab covered them over with the new-cut flax which had been spread out on the roof to dry (for she and her women were skilled in spinning and in needlework of bright colours), and went down to the king's soldiers. "Men of Israel?" she said, "and spies? There were indeed two men, but I knew not whence they came. When it fell dark, and time for shutting the gates, they went their way. I know not whither they went, but be you light of foot and you will overtake them." So the soldiers hurried away in pursuit of the spies by the road which goes down to Jordan fords; and when they had passed out the city gates were barred.

Then Rahab said to the spies, "By this window I will let you down," for her house stood on the city wall; "away up into the mountains, lest you should meet with the king's men. Lie you hid for three days in the caves; the search will then be over, and you can go your way." "Listen," the spies answered; "this is how we shall quit us of our oath to thee. When we have come into the land, tie this scarlet cord to the window here by which we go free. Bring under thy roof thy father, thy mother, thy brothers and all thy father's household. If any one of them goes out of thy door again, his blood shall be on his own head—we shall be guiltless. But if a hand is laid on any with thee in the house, we shall be blood-guilty. And if thou shouldst fail to keep our secret, we shall be quit of our oath." "So let it be," Rahab answered, and bade them farewell. When they had departed, Rahab tied the scarlet cord in the window.

It was the dark of the moon, but the great stars were swarming overhead and the spies escaped into the mountain waste above Jericho, and lay hid among the wild beasts until pursuit was over. On the third day they returned, swam through the downpour of Jordan and told Joshua all that had befallen them.

Joshua sent orders throughout the tribes that the people should prepare food and have all in readiness; "In three days you shall pass over Jordan into the land which the Lord your God has given you." They broke camp in the oasis of acacias, marched down to the border of Jordan, and there spent the night before the crossing.

It was summer in the vast river ravine. Flax had been cut; barley was ripe. All the valley was a long cloud of rolling verdure—tufted green canes, thorny tamarisks, orange-trees, lemon-trees, palms. The nightingale was singing; the sun-bird flashed from covert to covert; far away on a limestone peak the golden eagle watched the crowd and stir of strange multitudes, and remembered the smell of dusty battle-fields. And Jordan was in flood with the snow-water of Hermon. The three great terraces of its banks were brimming from brink to brink.

Early on the morrow the people came forth from their tents, silent and wondering, for Joshua had said to them, "Sanctify yourselves for the Lord, your God, will work marvels in your midst this day. And this shall be a token that the Lord is with you and will drive your enemies before you, all the folk of Heth, the Canaanites of the plains by the sea, and the Hivites of the hills, and the rustics, the Perizzites of the villages, and the men of Jebus. The ark of the Lord will lead you down to the river, and when the bearers put their feet in its waters Jordan will be divided before you."

The Levites, who bore the ark, lifted it up and went forward. The people watched it winding down among the rocks and trees of the gorge, and when it had gone two thousand cubits before them they followed it

company by company and tribe by tribe. The bearers of the ark came to the brink of the river; they went ankle-deep into the water, and stood there, as Joshua had bidden them.

Then, far away in its wooded ravine, at the city called Adam, "the red earth"—and that city is near Zaretan—Jordan was stayed; its waters stood and rose in a heap and flowed down no further. Perchance the Lord touched the high hills beetling over it, and toppled them into its course, and stayed it. Where the ark stood, the waters ran away from the feet of the Levites; all the swelling of Jordan was brought low; the terraces of his banks were laid bare; his bed was made dry rock.

And the ark stood until the people had passed over. Reuben and Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh, whose little ones had been left with their mothers in the fenced cities, led the way; mighty men of valour, forty thousand strong. When the people had hastened across, twelve men, one from each tribe, heaved up each a great stone upon his shoulder from the place where the ark stood, and bore it till they came to Gilgal, and there these stones were set up in a circle. And yet other twelve, one from each tribe, reared up twelve great stones where the ark stood. So, in the latter days when men asked, "What do these stones mean?" they should be remembrancers to the children of Israel for ever.

When all the people had passed over, Joshua cried to the Levites, "Come you up out of Jordan"; and they came and bore the ark of the Lord to the forefront of Israel. The waters were stayed no longer at the city of Adam, but came rolling down as before, and all the terraced banks were in flood from brim to brim.

It was the tenth day of the first month, the tenth day of Abib, the green April month, that the people came over Jordan. They journeyed through the palm-forest of the plains of Jericho, and that night they encamped at Gilgal on the edge of the moorland.

On the fourteenth day at even, when the sun had set

and the moon was full, they kept the passover; and they ate with their loins girt and with their staves in their hands. Forty years had gone by since that great wail for the first born went up in the Egyptian night, and Pharaoh cried to their fathers "Depart from my people; get you gone!" And Miriam was dead, and Aaron was dead, and Moses was dead.

After the passover they ate of the new harvest of Canaan, unleavened bread and parched corn; and on the morrow the manna ceased.

While they lay in their stone-ringed camp on Gilgal, Joshua went out to view the strength of Jericho. As he came nigh the city and looked, lo! a warrior was standing before him with his naked sword in his hand. Joshua went to him and said, "Art thou one of ours, or for our enemies?" The stranger answered, "No; I am the captain of the host of the Lord; and I am come."

Joshua fell on his face before him and said, "What doth my Lord say to his servant?" The captain of the Lord replied, "Take thy shoes from thy feet, for the ground on which thou standest is holy."

49. THE VALLEY OF TROUBLE.

JOSHUA took the shoes from his feet, and stood unshod before the captain of the host of the Lord.

The angel said to him, "Behold, I give Jericho into thy hands, and the king of Jericho, and all his warriors. Take good heed therefore while I instruct thee what thou shalt do."

As Joshua listened, his eyes were fixed as in a half-dream on the thronged and luxurious city of Ashtoreth; yet he was aware neither of its high white walls and towers, nor of the gardens and the palaces and temples muffled in green on the seven hills within the walls. The gates of the city were shut and barred in terror of Israel; no man went out and none entered; no traffic came in from the desert or up from the sea on the ancient ways of the merchants.

The captain of the host ceased speaking, and lo ! Joshua was alone. He sent orders through the camp, "Let the armed men come forth in the morning in their battle array"; and to the Levites he said, "Be ready to take up the ark of the covenant, and let there be seven priests with seven horns of jubilee."

In the morning there was a great stir in the camp at Gilgal. The fighting men stood under arms. The Levites raised up the ark by the acacia staves which lay in its rings of gold. Joshua said, "Let the armed men pass on before the ark of the Lord. March ye once round about the city, and let there be no shout raised nor any sound of voice among you." They went forward in their thousands and their tens of thousands, the mighty men of Israel. Next to them passed onward the seven priests sounding the horns of jubilee; and they were followed by the Levites bearing the ark of gold and the golden cherubims with outspread wings. Last of all came the rearguard of Israel in their thousands and their tens of thousands. So, with the horns of jubilee sounding, they marched round about the white walls and the towers of the seven-hilled city. As they passed by the house of Rahab on the wall, they saw the scarlet cord fastened in the window. The folk of the city looked down in awe on that strange pageant. When the wild clamour of the horns ceased for a little while, there was a sound of doom in the tramp of that silent multitude making the circuit of Jericho.

Day by day for six days they marched round about the city with the horns sounding. Then Joshua said, "To-morrow, when the Lord gives the city into our hands, you shall go into it every man straight before him. The ban of the Lord is upon it; and the city and all that is within it shall be destroyed; only Rahab and her household shall be spared. All the spoil of the city is under ban, touch it not lest you bring the camp under ban and fill it with trouble; but all the silver and gold, and the things of bronze and iron, which fire cleanses, are sacred to the Lord and shall go into His treasure."

On the seventh day they began to march round Jericho while the morning-star was still shining. Again and again that day they marched round it with the crying of horns and the tramp of a silent multitude sounding doom. Seven times they encompassed it on the seventh day, and the seventh time, at eventide, when the horns of jubilee had been blown, Joshua cried aloud, "Shout ! for the Lord has given you the city."

An amazing shout went up round the city from the immense multitude; the walls and towers sank down in ruin; the host of Israel entered in, every man straight before him. Only one fragment of the wall stood; there was a house upon it, and in the landward window of the house there was fastened a scarlet cord. The host of Israel went through the banned city, putting to the sword every living creature, men and women, children and greybeards, oxen and sheep and asses.

Joshua said to the two spies, "Get you to the house of Rahab and save her as you promised." They went and brought her to safety with her father and her mother, her brothers and all the people of her house; and they took them to Gilgal and lodged them outside the camp. But afterwards Salmon, a prince in Israel, married Rahab, and perchance he was one of the spies whom she received into her house. She lived long in the midst of Israel; and her son was Boaz and he married Ruth, a woman of Moab.

The palaces and temples and houses of the rich and populous city were burned to the ground by the host of Joshua; but the gold and silver, iron and bronze, were saved for the treasure of the Lord. And Joshua laid a curse upon the man who should rebuild Jericho: "He shall fix its foundations in the death of his first-born and set up its gates in the loss of his youngest son."

When Jericho lay in blue ashes Joshua sent up spies to Ai, which is on the hills east of Beth-el, and they brought back tidings, "The men of Ai are few; weary not the host of Israel, but let two thousand or three

thousand go up—enough for Ai.” About three thousand of the valiant were sent to destroy Ai, but the men of the place came out against them, broke them and chased them into the defiles, and slew six and thirty of them. Israel was stricken with dismay. Joshua and the princes rent their garments, scattered dust on their heads, and cast themselves down before the ark lamenting, until evening.

The Lord said to Joshua, “Up! Why dost thou lie on thy face? Israel has sinned and transgressed my covenant. They have taken of the spoil sacred to me and hidden it among their chattels. Wherefore Israel cannot withstand their enemies; they shall flee before them, for I shall not be with you until this iniquity be punished.” And the Lord bade Joshua summon the children of Israel before Him in their tribes, and the houses of their tribes, and the families of their houses.

They came in the morning, and drew lots to discover the guilty, and the lot fell upon the tribe of Judah; and among the houses of the tribe of Judah the lot fell upon the house of Zerah; and among the families of the house of Zerah the lot fell on the family of Zabdi, and in the family of Zabdi, when the men came before the Lord one by one, the lot fell on Achan, son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah.

Joshua said to Achan, “Give glory, my son, to the Lord, the God of Israel, and pay Him the homage of truth. Tell me what thou hast done, hide it not.” Achan answered, “Truly I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel. I saw in the spoil a brave Shinar robe, and two hundred shekels of silver, and an ingot of gold weighing fifty shekels. Greed mastered me, and I took them. They are hidden in the ground in the middle of my tent, and the silver is underneath.”

Joshua sent messengers to the tent, and they brought the spoil to him, and it was laid before the Lord. And Joshua and all Israel took Achan and the silver, the robe, the ingot of gold, the sons of Achan and his daugh-

ters, his oxen, his asses, his sheep and all that he had; they carried them up into the gloomy gorge of Achor. Joshua said to him, "Why hast thou brought trouble upon us? This day the Lord brings trouble upon thee."

All Israel caught up stones; they stoned them to death; they burned them on a great pyre. Over their ashes they piled a vast cairn of stones. To this day the gorge of Achor is "the valley of trouble."

Then the Lord bade Joshua go up with his host against Ai. "Into thy hands," He said, "I give the king of Ai and his people, his city and his country. With Ai thou shalt deal as thou didst with Jericho, but the plunder and the cattle you shall keep for yourselves. Lay an ambush behind the city."

Joshua despatched by night five thousand of his most valiant, to lie in ambush in the rocky gorges between Ai and Beth-el on the west. "Be alert, and not too far off," he said; "we shall flee before the men of Ai, and when we have drawn them away from the city, you shall take it; the Lord will give it into your hands." And the next day, at even, as the sun went down, the host of Israel spread like the shadow of a cloud over the rugged moors north of Ai, and encamped there. A valley lay between, and Joshua and his mighty men came down under the stars and lay that night in the midst of the valley.

When the king of Ai beheld them in the light of the dawn, an alarm was sounded. His people flew to arms and descended to the encounter. At the first onset the men of Israel turned and feigned flight into the wilds towards Jordan. "They run; they run as they did before!" was the shout as Ai pursued them. Out of the city thronged the people in hot haste, and down from the hill-sides streamed the men of the west country. There was not a man in Ai or in Beth-el but followed in pursuit of Israel.

Joshua ascended a height on the further side of the

valley, and the Lord said to him as he watched the feigned flight and pursuit, "Stretch out thy spear against Ai, for I give it to thee." Joshua stretched out the spear in his hand, and as he did so the five thousand leaped up from their ambush. They swept into the open city; they captured it, they fired it; the smoke of its burning rose dark into the heavens.

Down in the valley there was an outcry as of lions when the men of Ai saw the smoke of the city rolling up into the heavens. The mighty men fleeing to the wilderness turned upon them; the valiant of the ambush issued from Ai and closed them in; in the midst of Israel were Ai and Beth-el and knew not whither to turn; and Joshua stood on the height with his spear outstretched. The swords of Israel were round about them, spared not one of them, let not one escape; only the king of Ai they took alive and brought to Joshua. When they had made an end in the valley, they returned to the burning city, left no creature living within it, made it a dust-heap and a desolation for ever; but they took for their portion the spoil and the beasts.

Then Joshua lowered his spear, and crossed over to Ai, and hanged the king of Ai upon a tree until the evening. When the sun had set, the body of the king was cut down and flung into the gateway of the city, and a great cairn of stones was heaped over it.

50. THE VOICES ON THE MOUNTAINS.

WHEN the rumour of these events ran through the country all the kings west of Jordan, in the highlands and the foot-hills, and along the coast of the Great Sea, as far north as Lebanon, leagued together to break the might of Israel. But the people of the city of Gibeon were scared by the doom of Ai, and turned for safety to craft and cunning. A number of these Hivites of the midlands set out for Gilgal. They took old sacks on their asses and wine-skins torn and roughly mended. They wore patched shoes and ancient garments, and

their bread was dry and crumbling. They came to Joshua in the camp, and said to him and the people of Israel, "We are thy servants; from a distant country are we come, and we pray thee give us peace and make a league with us."

Joshua said, "What people are you, and whence?" "The land of thy servants is far away," the midlanders answered. "We are come because of the renown of Jehovah, your God. We have heard tell of Him, and of all He did in Egypt, and of His hand of power on the kings beyond Jordan—Sihon, king of Heshbon, and Og, king of Bashan, who was at Ashtaroth. Our elders and all the folk of our country said to us, 'Lay in good store of food, go you up to Gilgal, and say, "We are your servants; beseech you, league with us."' See our bread here; it was hot from the embers the day we set out to find you; now it is dry and in crumbs. These torn wine-skins were new when we filled them. Our clothes and our shoes are worn out. So long have we been wayfaring."

The men of Israel tasted their food—they broke bread with them; and they took no counsel of the Lord beforehand. Joshua gave the midlanders peace, made a league which saved them alive; and the princes of Israel confirmed it with an oath.

Three days had scarce gone by when Israel learned that these Hivites were their neighbours; for the host went up with them into their country, and on the third day beheld their cities—Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth and Kirjath-jearim. Wroth enough with their princes were the children of Israel, but their swords were stayed in the sheaths by the oath sworn in the name of the Lord.

Joshua said to the midlanders, "Why did you lie to us with a tale of wayfaring and a country far away?" "Thy servants had heard," they answered, "how the Lord, thy God, had commanded Moses to give you all this land and to destroy all the people in it. We were sore afraid for our lives; so we came thus to thee. Now

we are in thy hands; deal with us as thou thinkest good and just." "There is a curse laid on you," said Joshua; "all your days you shall be bondmen, hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God; but your lives are given you."

When it was known that the midlanders had broken from the league of kings and made shift to save themselves, Adoni-zedec king of Jerusalem, Hoham king of Hebron, Piram king of Jarmuth, Japhia king of Lachish, and Debir king of Eglon—five kings and their hosts—beleaguered Gibeon, on the steep round hill which guards the passes of Beth-horon. Hot-foot from Gibeon sped runners to Joshua with the word, "All the kings of the highlands are banded against us; forsake not thy servants; come up quickly, save us, help us."

The Lord said to Joshua, "Fear not these kings; I give them into thy hands; not one of them shall withstand thee." All through the moonlight night he hastened up from Gilgal with his mighty people of war. It was dawn, the sun kindling the eastern hills, the moon fading white in the west, when he appeared at Gibeon and fell suddenly on the leagued kings.

The Lord swept them in desperate rout before Israel. Israel pursued them through the steep and rugged defile to Beth-horon, and beat them to Azekah and Makkedah. As they fled down the headlong and still more rocky descent from Beth-horon, the Lord smote them with huge hail to Azekah. More were slain by the hail-stones than by the swords of Israel.

That fight was put into a ringing song for the camp-fires. And the song told how Joshua spoke to the Lord on the day that He gave them the Amorites, and said in the hearing of Israel:

"Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon,
 And thou, Moon, in the Vale of Gazelles!
 And the sun stood still, and the moon was stayed
 Till the host had avenged themselves on the foe.
 The sun in heaven stood still, nor sped
 To his setting for well-nigh a livelong day.



Pharaoh tells his Dream to the Wise Men.

Never a day, before or sinsyne,
 Has been like that whereon the Lord
 Gave His ear to the voice of a man ;
 For Jehovah fought for Israel."

Tidings were brought to Joshua, "The five kings are hidden in a cave at Makkedah." "Block up the cave," replied Joshua; "set a guard; and away after the enemy!" When they had slaughtered the fugitives, and the remnant had escaped into the walled towns, the host returned to camp at Makkedah; and Joshua said, "Open the cave, and bring me the five kings." They brought them in bonds—Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth and Lachish and Eglon. He called the captains of the war out of the host of Israel and said, "Put your feet on the necks of these kings"; and when they had trampled on their greatness, he slew the five and hung them on five trees until sundown, then flung their bodies into the cave and rolled up huge stones to block the entrance for ever.

That same day he stormed Makkedah, put it under the ban of the Lord, and destroyed every breathing creature within it. Through the land he went with fire and sword—through highlands and South Country, foot-hills and coast, from Gibeon to the Great Sea and from Kadesh to Gaza. In the highlands of Hebron he made an end of the giants, the Anakim, the huge-limbed race of old time; ay, and throughout the highlands of Judah and Israel. And he returned to his camp in Gilgal.

Then Jabin, king of Hazor, and all the kings in the highlands of the North Country, westward to Dor at the foot of Carmel, in the plains below Chinneroth, which is Gennesareth, and the land under Hermon—all these came out with swift horses and chariots and a multitude as many as the sands of the sea. But the Lord said, "Fear not them; to-morrow thou shalt hough their horses and burn their chariots." By the waters of Merom, between the waters, the swamp and the rocks of Hermon, Joshua routed them; chased them

to great Sidon, chased them to the watch-tower of Mizpeh; burned their chariots, burned their Hazor with fire, took their mounded cities for a spoil, spared neither man nor child among them.

For many a day Joshua fought with kings, until he had taken all the land. With Gibeon alone of all their cities he made peace; the rest he took in battle, and destroyed wholly.

After these things the children of Israel departed from Gilgal, and ascended to Shechem, as the Lord had commanded them. That is the house of Ebal and Gerizim, the high mountains. Over against each other they stand—Ebal in barren cliffs of blue rock; Gerizim a white dome, wooded and fertile. Between them grew the ancient terebinth in whose shade Abram pitched his tent, among whose roots Jacob buried the images of Laban. There spread the green fields in which Jacob sank his well.

Joshua went up into Ebal. From its top he looked over the inheritance of Israel, from beyond Jordan to the forest of Sharon and the blue sea, brimming high as though it would run over the land. He built an altar of brute stones, which no iron had dressed, and upon it were sacrificed burnt-offerings and thank-offerings; and the people feasted round it and rejoiced before the Lord. He reared up great stones also, faced them with plaster hard and smooth, and wrote clearly upon them the commandments of the Lord.

Then he divided the twelve tribes between the two mountains. Simeon, Levi and Judah and Issachar, Joseph and Benjamin went up into Mount Gerizim; and into Mount Ebal ascended Reuben, Gad and Asher and Zebulun, Dan and Naphtali; and, as Moses had charged them in the name of the Lord, the Levites lifted up their voices on Ebal and cried aloud, and the words rang out from mountain to mountain:

“Cursed be the man that makes any image, carved or molten, an abomination to the Lord, work of a craftsman’s hands, and puts it in a secret place!”

And all the people answered, and said, "Amen!"

"Cursed be he that despises his father or his mother!"

And all the people said, "Amen!"

"Cursed be he that removes his neighbour's landmark!"

And all the people said, "Amen!"

"Cursed be he that sets the blind astray on his road!"

And all the people said, "Amen!"

"Cursed be he that perverts the rights of the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow!"

And all the people said, "Amen!"

"Cursed be he that smites his neighbour unseen!"

And all the people said, "Amen!"

"Cursed be he that takes hire to shed the blood of the innocent!"

And all the people said, "Amen!"

"Cursed be he that fulfils not the words of this law and keeps them not!"

And all the people said, "Amen!"

In the like manner the Levites on Gerizim proclaimed aloud the blessings of the Lord; and so mountain answered to mountain.

Afterwards Joshua read all the words of the law that Moses had written to the whole gathering of the people, to the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were in their midst.

51. JOSHUA AND THE LISTENING STONE.

It was now seven years since Israel had crossed over Jordan; and though the country to be subdued was very great, the Lord bade Joshua divide it by lot between the nine tribes and the half tribe of Manasseh which had received yet no portion of their inheritance.

Then the children of Judah came to Joshua at Gilgal, and Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, reminded him how they had gone up from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the country, and how while others had disheartened the people, he had followed wholly in the way of the Lord. Moses had then sworn that the land his feet had trodden should be his inheritance and the inheritance of his children for ever. "See now," said Caleb, "the

Lord has kept me alive, as He said. Forty years and five it is since the Lord spoke that to Moses—when Israel roamed in the wilderness. To-day I am four score years and five, yet as hardy as on the day Moses sent me. What strength I then had, that have I now, for battle or for wayfaring. Give me that highland country of which the Lord spoke. Thou didst find at that time that there were giants there and cities great and walled. The Lord perchance will be with me, and I shall drive them out, as He said.”

Joshua blessed Caleb and gave him the country of his desire—Hebron, called of yore Kirjath-Arba, “city of Arba,” for in days of old Arba was a famous sheik of the Anakim, and that giant race had returned to the hills whence Joshua had driven them. To the tribe of Judah fell by lot all the country, mountain and plain, between the Dead Sea and the Great Sea on the west.

Another tract, between Jordan and the Great Sea, fell to the lot of Ephraim and the half tribe of Manasseh. On the south it touched Beth-horon and Beth-el, reached up to En-gannim, “the spring of the gardens,” and swept away in a great horn to Mount Carmel overlooking the sea. The children of Joseph complained of its narrowness, but Joshua said, “Up then, if you be a numerous people; clear the forest beyond; you shall drive out the Canaanites, for all their iron chariots and their might.”

Then the children of Israel took up the ark, and came over the rocky moors to Shiloh, the quiet plain encircled by hills, midway between Beth-el and Shechem. There on a knoll, beside a fine terebinth, they set up the tabernacle of the Lord, the tent of meeting, with its gold-plated pillars and cherubim hangings and covers of red and blue skins. Under their spears all the country was at peace around them.

Joshua said to the people, “How long will you hang back from taking the land which the God of your fathers has given you?” He sent forth three men from each tribe to map out all the country into seven portions,

which should go by lot to the seven landless tribes. "The sons of Levi," he said, "have no share in this, for their inheritance is the priesthood of the Lord." When the men returned, lots were drawn and the country was divided among the tribes. Out of the inheritance of Israel were given to the Levites forty cities and eight, with the pastures around them for their sheep and cattle. Six cities, three east and three west of Jordan, were made cities of refuge, wherein the unwilling slayer of a man should be safe from the avenger of blood until he had been brought to trial before the people.

To Joshua himself was given the place he desired, Timnath-serah, the terraced hill in the highlands of Ephraim, and there he built him a city.

Then Joshua dismissed Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh, who had kept faith and come gallantly over Jordan with him and fought for Israel. He blessed them and sent them to their homes with vast booty, raiment, cattle, silver and gold, bronze and iron, and bade them love the Lord their God and walk in His ways.

A long while after this, when Joshua had waxed old and stricken in age he summoned Israel to him with the elders and princes, and said to them, "You have seen what the Lord your God has done to all these nations for your sake, for it was the Lord who fought for you. Take heed then to your souls that you love the Lord your God. I am going the way of all the earth; and you know in your hearts that of all the good things promised by the Lord not one has failed you. As with the good, so shall it be with the evil. If you transgress His covenant, and turn to other gods and worship them, His wrath will be kindled, and you shall perish quickly in the good land that He has given you."

Afterwards he gathered all the tribes at Shechem, and when he had recalled to them their deliverance out of Egypt, their wanderings, and all the victories which Jehovah had given them, he said, "Put away from among you the gods which your fathers worshipped

beyond the river and in Egypt, and serve Jehovah in sincerity and truth. And if you do not find it good to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers worshipped beyond Jordan or the gods of the Amorites in this land. But I and my house—we shall serve Jehovah.”

The people answered, “Far from us be the thought of forsaking the Lord and serving other gods. The Lord, He is our God.”

Joshua said, “You have not the strength to serve the Lord, for He is a holy God, He is a jealous God, He will not forgive your transgressions and your sins. When you forsake Him, He will destroy you, even after He has been good to you.” The people said, “Not so! for we shall serve the Lord.”

Joshua said, “Against yourselves then you are witnesses that you have chosen the Lord, to serve Him.” “We are witnesses,” they answered.

“Then make an end of the strange gods among you, and turn your hearts to Jehovah, the God of Israel.” And all the people answered, “We shall serve Jehovah, our God, and His voice we shall obey.”

That day Joshua made a covenant with the people, and under the dark old terebinth, which was in the place sacred to the Lord, he reared up a great stone. “Behold!” he said, “this stone shall bear testimony; for this stone has heard all the words which the Lord has spoken to us.”

Here in Shechem, in the field which his father Jacob had bought of the sons of Hamor for a hundred “silver lamb” pieces, they laid to rest the body of Joseph, embalmed, and princely as on the day he died. That parcel of land became the heritage of the children of Joseph.

After these days Joshua, son of Nun, servant of the Lord died, and they buried him in a tomb cut in the rock of the hillside over against the city he had built. He was a hundred and ten years old.

Eleazar, the son of Aaron, died also, and him they

buried in a hill which had been given to Phinehas, his son, in the mountains of Ephraim.

All the days of Joshua Israel served Jehovah, and all the days of the elders who overlived Joshua, and who knew all that the Lord had done for Israel.

52. THE SMITING OF SISERA.

As the mighty men of the conquest passed away, there sprang up a generation which had not seen the wonders wrought by the Lord for His people, and the children of Israel turned aside from the God of their fathers and violated His covenant. They intermarried with the heathen tribes around them, and with them they worshipped the images of Baal and Astarté on the hill-tops, under the green trees, in the market-places of the cities. The Lord in His anger left them to themselves so that they fell a prey to their warlike enemies, who plundered them and reduced them to servitude. Yet when they remembered Him in their misery, He heard their cry, and in His compassion He raised up for them champions and deliverers. Many times He freed them from their oppressors, but as often they fell away from Him, and each time they suffered.

These deliverers and war-leaders were the "Judges" who ruled after Joshua, so far as there was any rule in Israel. The first was Othniel, the son of Caleb's younger brother. He threw off the yoke of Cushan-rishathaim, lord of the land of the two rivers; for forty years there was freedom, and again Israel fell away from the God of Jacob.

Then Eglon, king of Moab, captured the new Jericho, the city of palm-trees, and harassed Israel for eighteen years, but Ehud the left-handed slew him in his summer hall, sounded his horn in weald and on mountain to gather the tribes of Ephraim and Benjamin, and seizing the fords of Jordan, slew ten thousand of the Moab invaders. Shamgar, too, armed the swordless men of Judah with iron-spiked ox-goads, and delivered

them from the Philistines. For eighty years there was peace and freedom, and once more Israel fell away from Jehovah.

The Lord surrendered them in His wrath into the power of Jabin, the Canaanite king, who reigned at Hazor, rebuilt since Joshua's victory. Sisera was captain-in-chief of his army—a man of terror who raided the land with nine hundred chariots of iron till the high-ways of the traders were deserted, and wayfarers stole through the by-ways of wood and moorland. He ground down Israel with task-work, made them fellers of trees and trimmers of timber in the fir and cedar forests for the markets of Sidon. For twenty years they endured the burden, and they cried out to the Lord for deliverance.

At that time a woman was Judge in Israel, for Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, sat under a palm on the hills of Ephraim, between Ramah and Beth-el, dealing out justice among the people. On the day the Lord pitied the tribulation of Israel Deborah sent for Barak, son of Abinoam in Kadesh-Naphtali, and gave him God's command to march to Mount Tabor with ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun. "And Sisera, with his chariots and his host," said the Lord, "I will bring to thee at the river Kishon, and into thy hand I will give them." "If thou goest with me," Barak answered Deborah, "I will go; without thee I will not go." "Be sure I shall go with thee," said the prophetess, "but there will be no glory for thee in this venture; the Lord will give Sisera into the hands of a woman."

Into the north went Barak and Deborah. The great-hearted gathered to them, and they took their stand on Tabor with ten thousand men. In the south-east, no great way from the mountain, dwelt Heber the Kenite beside "the terebinth of the wandering tent," and he was of the sons of Hobab, that is Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses.

When word of the rising reached Sisera at Harosheth by the forest, he sped to the Kishon with all his chariots

—nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the host he could muster. Then Deborah aroused the spirit of Barak, “Up and away! This day it is that the Lord gives thee Sisera.” Barak swept down from Tabor with his ten thousand.

As they descended, the Lord was already fighting for them. A tempest of sleet and icy rain beat in the faces of the Canaanites. It whirled back their arrows; it struck their horses with terror. The wheels of their chariots sank in the swamps of Kishon; Kishon came down in flood. The Lord gave them a prey to the swords of Israel. Sisera leaped from his chariot, and fled on foot. While Barak routed the foe and pursued them to Harosheth, Sisera reached the terebinth of Heber.

Jael the wife of Heber came out to meet him. “Welcome to my tent, my lord,” she said; “enter and fear not.” He entered and flung himself down, and she hid him under a coverlet.

“I pray thee, give me a little water,” he said, “for I am thirsty.” She opened a skin of milk and gave him to drink, and covered him. He spoke to her again. “Stand in the entrance of the tent, I beg of thee, and if any should ask, Is there a man here? answer him, No.”

Overcome with weariness he fell into a fathomless sleep.

Jael, standing in the entrance of the tent, thought with a hot heart of Israel enslaved in the land of their inheritance and of the glory of Jehovah mocked by idols of wood and stone. She took an iron tent-pin and a mallet in her hands. She stole upon him noiselessly. She drove the iron through his temples into the ground; and Sisera was dead.

Then as Barak, in pursuit of Sisera, reached the tents of Heber, Jael went out to meet him. “Come,” she said, “and I will show thee the man thou art seeking.” She drew aside the coverlet, and showed him Sisera lying dead.

So the Lord humbled Jabin, king of Canaan, and

the swords of Israel beset him until they had destroyed him. As Miriam and Moses sang on the shore of the sea, so Deborah and Barak, and the men and women of Israel sang the song of the prophetess :

<i>Voices of Men.</i>	For the princes who went to the leading of Israel,
<i>Voices of Women.</i>	For the people who valiantly followed the princes,
<i>Both Voices.</i>	Bless ye Jehovah !
<i>Men.</i>	Hear, O ye kings,
<i>Women.</i>	Give ear, O ye princes,
<i>Men.</i>	I sing, to the Lord I sing—
<i>Women.</i>	I sing to the Lord, God of Israel.

And they compared the glory of Jehovah in the days of the wilderness with their own helplessness under oppression :

<i>Voices of Men and Women.</i>	Lord, in Thy going forth from Seir, In Thy marching out from the fields of Edom, The earth trembled, the heavens streamed down, The clouds streamed down in water, Before the Lord the mountains quaked, Yon Sinai shook before the God of Israel.
<i>Voices of Men.</i>	In the days of Shamgar, son of Anath, In the days of Jael, The high roads were deserted, Wayfarers went by secret ways.
<i>Voices of Women.</i>	Leaders had ceased in Israel, Leaders there were none, Till I arose—Deborah, Till I arose, a mother in Israel.
<i>Voices of Men.</i>	Strange gods they had chosen. Then on the city gates elashed war. Not a spear was seen, not a buckler Amid forty thousand in Israel.

But those black days were at an end, and they raised their voices in thanksgiving :

<i>Voices of Men.</i>	My heart goes out to you, leaders of Israel ;
<i>Voices of Women</i>	To you, O people, who valiantly followed them !

Both Voices. Bless ye Jehovah !
 You that ride upon dapple-white she-asses,
 You that sit upon broidered housings,
 You that go afoot wayfaring,
 You that water the flocks at the well-
 troughs,
 Safe from the twanging bows of the archers,
 Praise the righteous acts of Jehovah,
 The righteous acts of His rule in Israel,
 When the people smote the gates of their
 foemen.

Then the song told of the gathering of the tribes,
 and of those who hung back in the hour of need :

Voices of Men. Reveille, reveille, Deborah !
 Awake with thy battle-song !

Voices of Women. Arise, Barak, and bring home thy captives,
 Thou son of Abinoam !

Both Voices. There triumphed a remnant of the people ;
 Jehovah gave me victory over the mighty.

Voices of Men. Out of Ephraim came the sons of the hills of
 Amalek,
 In thy train, Ephraim, marched the troops
 of Benjamin.
 From the east came the chiefs of Machir—
 From Zebulun the sceptred rulers.

Voices of Women. With Deborah were the princes of Issachar ;
 Down from Tabor, with Barak,
 Into the valley swept Issachar.

Voices of Men. Beside the brooks of Reuben
 Counsel they took like great-hearts.

Voices of Women. But why did you wait by the sheep-folds,
 Listening to shepherds piping ?

Both Voices. Beside the brooks of Reuben
 Great were the searchings of heart.

Voices of Men. From over Jordan Gilead budged not.

Voices of Women. And why did Dan cleave to his ships ?

Voices of Men. Asher sat still on the shore of the sea,

Voices of Women. Nor stirred from his tents in the creeks.

Both Voices. Zebulun was a people hazarding life to the
 death,
 And no less Naphtali,
 On the heights of the moorland.

Then the harp of the prophetess throbbled with the

turmoil of battle, and the song told of the overthrow and the destruction of Sisera :

- Voices of Men.* The kings came, they fought;
Fought the kings of Canaan
At Tanaach, by the waters of Megiddo.
They took no spoil of silver.
- Voices of Women.* Out of the heavens the stars leaned fighting,
The stars in their courses fought against
Sisera;
The river Kishon swept them away—
That river of ancient battles, Kishon.
- Voices of Men.* O my soul, thou hast trampled the mighty !
Then beat the hoofs of the horses,
The hoofs of the horses rearing and plunging
In the headlong flight of the warriors.
- Voices of Women.* Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of Jehovah,
Curse with a curse her villagers,
For they came not to the help of the Lord,
To the help of the Lord, among the valiant.
- Voices of Men.* Blessed be Jael among women,
The wife of Heber the Kenite—
Blessed among women who dwell in tents !
He prayed for water, she gave him milk,
Brought curdled milk in a prince's cup.
She has reached out her hand to the tent-pin,
Her right hand to the workman's mallet.
She has smitten Sisera, cloven his head ;
She has pierced and struck through his
temples.
At her feet he has sunk, he has fallen, he has
lain down ;
At her feet he has sunk, he has fallen ;
Where he sank, there he fell down dead.
- Voices of Women.* At the window, through the lattice
The mother of Sisera looks out, and cries,
“ Why is his chariot so long in coming ?
Why linger the wheels of his chariot ? ”
The wisest of her ladies answer her—
And herself she answers,
“ Are they not gathering plunder ?
Are they not sharing spoil ?
A damsel—two damsels to every man ;
A spoil of coloured raiment to Sisera,
A prize of coloured embroidered raiment,
A coloured robe, two robes embroidered,
For the neck of the victor ! ”

Both Voices. So may all Thine enemies perish, O Lord;
But they that love Him are as the sun
When he goes forth in his might.

53. GIDEON TREE-FELLER.

FOR forty years they were free and at peace. Then once more Israel forsook the God of their deliverance, and the Lord gave them over to Midian and Amalek and the Children of the East. Summer after summer, as the corn-fields whitened, these hordes swarmed with their tents over the northern fords of Jordan, swept off harvest and herds, trampled the standing crops, ravaged the country from Jezreel to Gaza. They were like the legions of the locust. Their kings went in scarlet, with earrings and collars of gold; their camels were beyond reckoning, and glittered with golden chains and crescent moons.

The children of Israel fled to caves, lurked in ravines of the mountain torrents, sought for safety on scarpèd rocks fenced with stones. At length they cried out to Jehovah to save them.

In the seventh summer raid came the angel of the Lord, and sat under the terebinth of Ophrah, the tree of Joash of the house of Abiezer. The son of Joash was threshing at the wine-press, hoping to save his wheat in its rocky chambers from the hands of the raiders. A king's son he was to look at, and his name was Gideon, "the Tree-feller."

As Gideon looked towards the terebinth, the angel became visible to him, and said, "Jehovah is with thee, thou valiant hero!" "Ah, my lord," said Gideon, "if Jehovah is with us, why have we all these ills befalling us? Where are all the wonders of which our fathers tell us? Nay, the Lord has abandoned us and we are given over to Midian." The Lord fixed His eyes on him and said, "Go thou in thy strength and deliver Israel!" But Gideon, who knew not to whom he spoke, replied, "Ah, my lord, how should I deliver

Israel? Our house is the poorest in Manasseh, and I am the least in the house." "But I shall be with thee," said the Lord; "thou shalt beat all Midian like one man."

Wondering who the stranger might be, wondering whether indeed he was not dreaming, Gideon said, "If I have found favour with thee I pray thee stay under this tree till I return." "I will stay," said the angel.

Gideon returned with food for the stranger—flesh of a kid and unleavened bread, and the angel said, "Lay them on this rock." Gideon laid them on the rock. The angel touched them with his staff; the rock broke into flames and consumed them, and in a moment Gideon was alone beside the terebinth. "Woe is me!" he cried; "I am but a dead man, for I have seen the angel of Jehovah face to face." But the Lord was gracious to him. "Peace on thee!" He said; "fear not; thou shalt not die."

Gideon built an altar beside the rock, and called it Jehovah-shalom, "the Lord my peace."

The horde of the raiders swarmed over Jordan. They blackened with their tents the bright harvest fields of Jezreel. Gideon rose up clothed with the spirit of the Lord, set his slug-horn to his lips, and summoned the house of Abiezer to war. The war-arrows were sent through Manasseh, and the tribesmen gathered under arms. Runners sped to Asher and Zebulun and Naphtali, and the men of the forest and the hills trooped down to meet him.

Then Gideon besought the Lord to grant him two signs that He would indeed save Israel by his hand. His prayer was granted, and these were the signs. A fleece spread out on the threshing-floor was drenched with the dew of the night, while all the ground near it remained dry; and on the next night, all the ground was wet with dew, while the fleece spread upon the threshing-floor remained dry.

So two and thirty thousand of the fighting men of Israel encamped beside the Well of Trembling under the

heights of Gilboa. Below them, on the plain northward, lay the horde of Midian, one hundred and thirty-five thousand strong, near the hill of Moreh. The Lord said to Gideon, "Thou hast too many men; if I gave the victory to all these, Israel would boast vainglorious, 'It was our own hands that saved us.' Let all who are weak-hearted and afraid, return to their homes." As the children of Israel looked out over that immense crowd of their enemies, dread came upon most, and out of the two and thirty thousand twenty and two thousand departed, and ten thousand remained. The Lord said, "Still they are too many. Bring them to the Well of Trembling, and watch them how they drink, some standing and some kneeling down to the water. He who lifts the water in his hand to his mouth shall go with thee, and no other." Gideon watched them drinking, and reckoned them. Of those who lifted hand to mouth, there were but three hundred; and the Lord said, "With these I will save you, and give you the host of Midian. Let the rest go." So Gideon disbanded the deep drinkers, but kept their war-horses and provisions.

When it was silent night, the Lord spoke to Gideon: "Awake, and get thee down to the host sleeping. Take Phurah thy servant, if it troubles thee to be alone. Thou shalt hear what will hearten thee." These two stole down to the outposts slumbering about their fires. Beside the tents Gideon heard a man talking to a comrade. "I have been dreaming," he said; "and look you! a wretched barley-cake came whirling into our camp. It struck the captain's tent, and brought it down, and turned it topsy-turvy." "That," said his comrade, "could only have been the sword of Gideon, son of Joash, an Israel man. God has given Midian and all the host into his hands." Gideon, as he heard the words, praised the Lord God and hastened back to his camp.

"Up!" he cried, "for this is the day of deliverance!" He divided his three hundred into three companies, told them their places on three sides of the enemy.

“And when you hear my war-horn,” he said, “and see my torch flaming, blow you your horns, wave your torches, raise your cry, ‘For the Lord and for Gideon!’ and then stand fast.”

The three hundred flitted across the plain like shadows, each man with his war-horn in one hand, and in the other a torch smouldering in a jar. The night was cloudy, the hour drawing to midnight, the host asleep, the camp in darkness. So they surrounded Midian, three hundred shadows. At Gideon’s signal they broke their jars, shook their torches into flame, sounded their war-horns, and raised their rallying cry, “For God and for Gideon!”

The wild horde leaped up in the darkness, heard the clamour, saw the lights, and ran in screaming panic. They mistook friend for foe, fugitive for pursuer. Swords were out against swords. Midian fell on Amalek, the Children of the East slew and were slain. All the while the three hundred stood, each man in his place, sounding horns and brandishing torches until the wild horde, cutting their way through allies and kinsmen, broke loose towards Jordan. The men of Naphtali and Asher and all Manasseh went out in hot pursuit of them. Ephraim got down to Jordan fords, slew their princes, Oreb, “the raven,” and Zeeb, “the wolf,” and carried their heads to Gideon, beyond the river.

For Gideon had crossed with his three hundred, faint yet pursuing, in chase of the Midian kings, Zebah and Zalmunna. When he reached Succoth he besought the lords of the place to give his men bread, but they mocked him, “Thou dost not yet hold in thy grip the strong hands of Midian!” “When I come back,” Gideon said, “I will scourge you with thorns.” At Penuel too he asked for bread and the elders refused him. “When I come back,” said Tree-feller, “I will shake your tower about your ears.”

He made a circuit towards the desert, came by night upon the kings, lying secure, as they thought, in the stone circle at Karkor with fifteen thousand of the

Children of the East, the remnant of that vast horde slaughtered west of Jordan. Gideon routed them, and bringing back the kings in chains, he said to the lords of Succoth, "Here are Zebah and Zalmunna, the strong hands of Midian with which you mocked me!" and he took spiked branches of acacia to the lords of Succoth, and—as the people said in those days—"he let them know"; and he shook down the tower about the heads of the lords of Penuel and slew the town's people.

Then he said to Zebah and Zalmunna, "What like were the men you slew at Tabor?" "Even as thyself," replied the kings; "each was like a king's son." "They were my brothers," said Gideon, "the sons of my mother. As the Lord lives, if you had saved them I would spare you. Up!" he said to Jether, his first-born, "up and slay them!" But Jether's hand shrank from his sword; he was but a lad. "Up, thyself, and slay us," said the kings; "as a man is, so his strength is." With his own hand Gideon made an end of them, and stripped the gold chains and crescent moons from their dromedaries.

The people of Israel were eager to make Gideon king, but he refused. "I will not rule over you," he said; "nor shall my son. The Lord shall rule over you." For his share in the spoil of Midian they gave him, as he desired, all the golden nose-rings and ear-drops taken from the enemy; and these weighed seventeen hundred shekels of gold; and they added the scarlet raiment of the kings, and jewels and other ornaments of the Midian women.

For forty years, while Gideon was alive, the country was in quietness, and the raiders of Midian came no more. Gideon died at a good old age, and was buried at Ophrah. He left many sons but the worst of them slew all his brothers but one, and came himself to an evil end.

54. THE DAUGHTER OF JEPHTHAH.

WHEN all this had come and gone, Tola was Judge for twenty years and three, and Jair for two and twenty years after him. Once more the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, for in their perversity it seemed as though any god—Baal or Astarté, or the gods of Syria and Sidon, or the gods of Moab and Ammon and the Philistines—were more desirable than Jehovah, who had brought them out of bondage and delivered them many a time. So the Philistines in the west oppressed them, and in the east the children of Ammon, and these last came over Jordan and harried Judah and Benjamin and Ephraim; for the Lord turned His back upon them, until they came with loud cries to Him to save them.

Now when Ammon were gathering for yet another raid, the princes of Gilead bethought them of Jephthah, a bandit chief who was an outcast son of Gilead. They went to him in the land of Tob, which lies towards Damascus, and prayed him to lead their people against Ammon.

“Why do you come to me in your straits?” asked Jephthah; “was it not you who hated me, and helped my brothers to expel me from my father’s house?”—for indeed when his father was dead, his brothers had risen up against him, “Out, son of the foreign woman! thou shalt have no share in our heritage.” Jephthah refused to help them until they promised that he should be their ruler when he had delivered them from Ammon. He returned to his home with them, and the people made him their prince and captain; and they swore to their promise before the great altar of the Lord which their fathers had set up in Mizpeh.

Jephthah sent envoys to the king of the children of Ammon. “What quarrel is there between you and me,” he asked, “that you have come up in arms into my land? The Lord God of Israel gave it to our fathers’ swords three hundred years ago. If it was once the land of your fathers and you claim it, why have you not

recovered it within that time? But I have done you no wrong; and I call Jehovah the Judge to decide this day between Israel and Ammon."

The king of Ammon turned away in scorn. Then the spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah to deliver Israel; and the mighty marauder, whose mind had been darkened by the wanton and cruel worship of the gods around him, made a vow to Jehovah at the altar of Mizpeh: "If Thou wilt give me the sons of Ammon into my hand, whosoever comes out of my house to meet me on my happy return shall be my burnt-offering to the Lord God." He took the field; the Lord gave Ammon into his hand; from Aroer to Minnith, a tract of twenty towns—ay, to the Plain of the Vineyards he chased them with red death. And the pride of Ammon was humbled.

Jephthah returned in triumph to Mizpeh. Out of his house came his daughter to meet him, with dancing girls and timbrels. She was his only child; and for a moment he rejoiced in the little round red mouth that came singing to meet him; the next he remembered his vow, and rent his garments.

"Ah, child, child!" he said, "thou hast brought my head low with trouble. For I—I have made a vow to the Lord, and cannot go back." "If thou hast made a vow, father," she said, "do with me as thou hast promised the Lord, now that He hath avenged thee on thy enemies." Then she said to her father, "Only grant me this; let me alone for two months so that I may go with my companions and weep in the mountains." "Go then!" he answered.

When she had wept because she must die before babe of hers had been laid in her arms, or any man had loved her, she returned to her father; and Jephthah fulfilled his vow.

From that time it was a custom among the maidens of Israel to go every year for four days and comfort the spirit of the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite.

55. THE MAN OF THE SUN.

LONG after Jephthah was dead, when the Judges Ibzan and Elon and Abdon had passed away, and the Philistines had oppressed Israel for many years Manoah lived in Zorah, a town on one of the vine-clad hills of Dan, and it looked down on the cornfields of the Philistines. The angel of God appeared to Manoah's wife and said, "Thou hast no children, but a little son thou shalt have; and he shall be sacred to the Lord. He shall taste no wine or strong drink; his hair shall grow in long locks unclipped from his birth; and he shall begin the deliverance of Israel from the Philistines." When the child was born, he was called Samson, "the man of the sun"; and he grew mightily and the Lord blessed him.

When he came to his strength he saw a Philistine maiden at Timnath, and he wanted her for his wife. His father said, "Is there never a woman among the daughters of Israel but thou must needs have a heathen Philistine?" Still Samson had his way, and his father and mother went back with him to ask the maiden in marriage. Near Timnath a young lion sprang roaring out of the vineyards, but Samson caught him by the jaws and tore him asunder as he would have torn a kid. Months afterwards, when he went to take his wife to his home, he turned aside to look at the lion. It was a white skeleton, and within its ribs was a swarm of bees with their honey-combs. He took some of the honey and shared it with his father and mother, and they went on their way eating.

Thirty young men of Timnath were invited to the marriage-feast which lasted seven days. While they were amusing themselves with riddles Samson said, "I will set you a riddle. If you can guess the answer in these seven days, I will give you thirty linen shirts and thirty changes of clothing; if not, you shall forfeit the same to me." "Let us hear the riddle," said the companions. Said Samson,

“Meat came out of the eater,
And out of the strong came the sweet.”

The seventh day came, and they had found no answer. They went to Samson's wife and said, “Was it to plunder us that we were asked to the feast? Get us the answer, or we shall burn down the house and you with it.” She went to Samson, and so teased him with her cajoling and tears that at last he told her; and as the sun went down the companions answered the riddle:

“Honey!—what is there sweeter?
A lion!—his strength who can beat?”

Said Samson, “Had you not ploughed with my heifer, you would not have found out my riddle”; and straightway he strode down to Ashkelon, slew thirty Philistines, stripped them, and paid his forfeit to the companions; but he was so much vexed with his wife that he returned home without her.

He forgot his anger and went again to Timnath. He found that his wife had married one of the companions of the feast. “I thought you hated her,” said her father, “so I gave her to him.” “Now,” cried Samson to himself, “I am not to blame if I do these Philistines an injury.” It was harvest time, and the reapers were in the fields. He caught three hundred jackals, tied them, two together, tail by tail, with a lighted torch between the tails, and let them loose into the corn. Stooks and standing corn took fire, and the flames spread to the vines and olive-trees. When the Philistines discovered that this was Samson's revenge for the loss of his wife, they took the woman and her father and burnt them. “Is that your way?” said Samson; “then I shall not hold my hand till I have been avenged on you.” He made a great slaughter among them, and went to live in the cleft which pierces the great rock Etam through and through.

There the men of Judah found him. “Why hast thou brought the Philistines upon us with thy mischief?” they said. “Dost thou not know they are our masters?”

Now we have come, three thousand strong, to bind thee and give thee up to them." They swore that they themselves would not kill him, and the strong summer-tempered man let them bind him with two new cords. The Philistines shouted with triumph at the sight of him; but the might of the Lord came upon him; he burst his bonds like scorched flax, and snatching up the jawbone of an ass that had died by the wayside, he slew a thousand of them.

For twenty years Samson was Judge in Israel.

Upon a day he went to Gaza, the gay town which looked from its hill over a league of gardens to the dark blue sea. The Philistines shut the city gates, and plotted to kill him as he went out in the morning. Samson rose at midnight. He found the gates barred. With a quiet laugh he plucked up the gate-posts like tent-pins, threw posts, gates and bars upon his shoulder, and dropped them on a hill-top above Hebron.

Afterwards Samson loved a woman in the vale of Sorek; and her name was Delilah. The lords of the Philistines bribed her with eleven hundred silverlings* to discover for them the secret of his strength. Three times the big sunny man fooled her with tales of binding which would take his strength from him. Thrice she betrayed him, but each time he shook himself free, and the knaves in hiding who sprang upon him fled for their lives. Then Delilah said petulantly, "How canst thou say, 'I love thee,' when thy heart is not with me? Three times now thou hast befooled me, and thou hast not told me what gives thee thy strength." Day after day she plagued him with wiles and entreaties until she well-nigh teased him to death, and at last he told her his secret. "Iron has never touched my head, for I was vowed to Jehovah from my birth. If my hair were shorn, I should be as weak as any man."

Delilah sent a runner to the Philistine lords. "Come up at once," she said; "this time he has opened his heart to me." The lords hastened to Sorek and they

* About £700.

brought the price of the traitress with them. Delilah lulled the fool of the world to sleep. As he lay with his head on her lap, she had his seven locks of long bright hair shorn away. She awoke him with the familiar cry of treachery, "The Philistines are upon thee, Samson!" He aroused himself, and said with drowsy good-nature, "I shall come out of it as I have done at other times; I shall shake myself loose from them." He did not know that the Lord had departed from him.

The Philistines leaped out from their ambush and mastered him. They put out his eyes. They loaded him with chains of bronze, took him down to Gaza, and set him, like a woman, to grind corn at the hand mill in the prison-house.

There, without strength and without sight, lay the strong sunny-hearted man doing a bondwoman's task. But on a day, when his hair had somewhat grown again, the Philistines held feast in Gaza to the honour of their god Dagon. "Our god," they sang with music and dancing, "has delivered into our power the enemy who ravaged our land and multiplied our dead." When they were merry with wine in the house of the god, "Bring us Samson," they cried, "and let him make sport for us."

Samson was brought from his prison, and the Philistines in the temple and the crowd of men and women, looking down into the open court from the arcade of the roof, shrieked with laughter as they saw the huge blind man buffeted and made a laughing-stock. When they gave him a little breathing-space, he said to the lad who guided his steps, "Let me feel the pillars that hold up the house, so that I may lean upon them and rest." Then out of the mighty heart of the man in darkness came the broken cry, "O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee . . . and give me strength, I pray thee . . . only this once, O God . . . that I may be instantly avenged on the Philistines . . . for my two eyes." He laid his two hands about the two central

pillars which held up the roof. "Let me die with the Philistines," he said.

There was a moment of silent horror, then a tumult of terrified shrieks, as the multitude saw the blind giant strain at the pillars with all his might. The great cedar beams snapped, and the house of Dagon came down in ruins. That day three thousand men and women perished in Gaza; he had slain more at his death than he slew during his life.

There was no Philistine to say them nay when the sons of his father's house came to carry him home. They buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol, in the burial-place of Manoah.

56. NAOMI AND RUTH.

IN the days of the Judges war or drought brought a famine upon the country; and Elimelech, a man of Beth-lehem of Judah, went with his wife Naomi and their two sons to sojourn in the fruitful uplands of Moab. Elimelech died, and Naomi lived with her sons. They married women of Moab, Orpah, "the fawn," and Ruth, "the friend"; but when ten years had passed away, the two sons died. So Naomi was left without husband or son in a strange country.

When she heard that the Lord had visited His people and blessed them with bread, she took such a longing for the white ridge above the green slopes and the white town of a single street, that she had no ease of heart in Moab. She set out to return to her own land, and her two daughters-in-law accompanied her upon her way. When it was time to part she said to them, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's house, and may the Lord be good to you as you have been to the dead and to me. The Lord grant that you find rest, each of you, in a husband's house."

She kissed them; but they wept aloud and said, "No, no; we will go with thee to thy people." Naomi said, "Return, my daughters! Why should you come

with me? Already I am sorry and sore for your sakes that the Lord has put out His hand against me." Again they wept aloud. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

Naomi said to Ruth, "See, thy sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods. Do thou return now also." Ruth replied, "Do not press me to leave thee, and to go back, far from thee. Whither thou goest I go; where thou stayest I stay; thy people shall be my people, and thy God shall be my God; where thou diest I die, and there shall I be buried. May the Lord have no pity on me, if anything but death separates me from thee."

Naomi said no more to dissuade her, and they travelled together to Beth-lehem. The women of Beth-lehem pressed eagerly around her and said, "Is it Naomi?" and she replied, "Do not call me Naomi ('sweetness'), but Mara, for the Lord has filled me with bitterness." So Naomi returned with Ruth to be among her own people.

Below in the eastern valley the reapers were reaping in the barley, and the wheat was yellowing. Ruth said to Naomi, "Let me go and glean in some field where the master will be willing"; and she went and followed the reapers. Now it chanced that the field in which she gleaned belonged to Boaz, a rich and powerful man of the house of her father-in-law Elimelech. And here, precisely, was Boaz come down to his fields from Beth-lehem. He greeted the harvesters, "The Lord be with you," and "The Lord bless thee," they replied. "Whose damsel is that?" he asked the overseer. "She is the young Moab woman," he said, "that was with Naomi when she returned from the land of Moab. She prayed for leave to glean among the sheaves, and she has been here since morning."

Boaz said to Ruth, "Dost thou hear, daughter? Do not go elsewhere to glean. I would have thee remain here and go with my maid-servants wherever there is reaping; my young men are forbidden to touch thee.

And when thou art thirsty come to the water-jars and drink." She fell at his feet and said, "How have I found favour with thee that thou shouldst look kindly on a stranger?" Boaz answered, "I have been made aware of all that thou hast done for thy mother-in-law since the death of her husband, and they told me how thou didst leave father and mother and the land of thy birth to come to a country that was not known to thee. May the Lord repay thee for all thou hast done, and a full reward mayst thou have from Jehovah, the God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to a refuge." "Oh, my lord," said Ruth, "thou hast comforted thy servant, though I be not a maid of thy household."

At meal-time Boaz called her to come and eat and to dip her morsel in the vinegar. She sat beside the harvesters, and they gave her roasted corn, and what she had over she kept. Boaz said to his young men, "Let her glean among the sheaves; drop handfuls for her on purpose, and do not put her to the blush."

In the evening she threshed out the barley she had gleaned and took it home to Naomi, and gave her what she had set aside at meal-time. All the happenings of the day she told her; "and the man in whose field I was," she added, "is called Boaz." "May he be blessed by the Lord," said Naomi—"the Lord, who shows His compassion now for the living as He did for those that are dead. This man," she added, "is our relative. He is one of our nearest kinsmen." (Now the rights of the nearest kinsman are these; to redeem the inheritance of his kinsman, to marry his widow, and to avenge his death, if he died by violence.)

All through the harvesting of the barley and the wheat Ruth gleaned with the maid-servants of Boaz.

Naomi said to Ruth, "My daughter, I would fain have thee settled, that I might see thee happy. Is not Boaz our kinsman? Look now, to-night he is to winnow the barley on the threshing-floor. Bathe and anoint thyself, put on thy garments, and go down to the threshing-floor. But do not make thyself known until

he has eaten and drunk. When he goes to lay him down, take notice where his place is; afterwards go thou and uncover his feet, and lay thee down by them. He will then himself tell thee what thou art to do."

The threshing-floor was on a flat rock on the edge of the field, and when the day's winnowing had been done in the wind of the evening, Boaz, the portly man, sat down, and ate and drank, and was merry-hearted. Then he went and laid him down to rest at the end of a pile of sheaves in the warm summer night of the valley. When all was still, Ruth came softly, and uncovered his feet and lay down by them.

In the middle of the night the man awoke with a start. He leaned forward, and felt in the darkness, and there was a woman lying at his feet. "Who art thou?" he asked. "I am Ruth thy handmaid," she answered. "Spread thy wing over thy handmaid, for thou art a near kinsman." "The Lord bless thee, daughter," said Boaz; "what thou hast now done speaks more graciously for thee than what thou didst before, for thou hast not gone seeking after young men, poor or rich. Now, daughter, do not fear. All thy wish I will give thee, for there are none in the gateway of Beth-lehem but know thee for a virtuous woman. Yet there is a kinsman nearer to thee than I. Stay here this night. To-morrow—if he will use his right as a kinsman, well and good; let him use it; but if he will not, then—as the Lord lives!—I will use it. Lie still until morning."

While it was still twilight so dim that they could not recognize each other she arose from his feet. Boaz filled her mantle with barley, and helped her to place it on her head. When she came to her mother-in-law Naomi said, "Is it thou, daughter?" for it was still the dusk of the morning. Ruth told her all that had happened. "And he gave me these six measures of barley, for he said, 'Thou shalt not go home empty-handed to thy mother-in-law.'" "Keep thyself quiet, my daughter," said Naomi, "until thou knowest the end,

for this man will not rest until he has finished this matter to-day."

Boaz went up to Beth-lehem, and sat in the gateway of the town, where folk gather and do business. Now he who was nearest of kin came by, and Boaz called him and took ten of the elders of the town and prayed them to sit down beside him in the gate. "Naomi," he said, "who has come back from the land of Moab, has sold the piece of land which was our brother Elimelech's. I thought it right to let thee know, kinsman. Now if thou wilt redeem it, redeem it; but if thou wilt not, tell me that I may know; for thou art nearest of kin, and I come next to thee." "I will redeem it," said the man.

"There is yet more to say," Boaz added. "When thou buyest the land from Naomi, thou wilt also buy it of Ruth the Moabitess, for she is the widow of the son who is dead and it will fall to thee to marry her." "Nay," said the man, "that I cannot do. Do thou therefore take to thyself the right of the nearest kinsman. Buy on thy own account; here is my shoe!"—for in this fashion of old was a bargain made hard and fast, with a shoe.

Then Boaz said, "You are all witnesses this day that I have bought this land which was our brother Elimelech's, and that I have gotten for wife Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of his son Mahlon, that the name of the dead shall not perish among his kinsfolk and in the gate of his native town. You are witnesses this day." All the people in the gate and the ten elders answered, "We are witnesses," and they called down blessings on Ruth and Boaz.

So Boaz married Ruth. When her son was born, the women who were neighbours said to Naomi, "Blessed be Jehovah who has given a little kinsman. He will make thee thyself again and will cherish thee in thy old age, for thy daughter-in-law, who loves thee and is more to thee than seven sons, is his mother." The neighbours gave the child a name, and called him

Obed, which is "serving." And Naomi took the babe and put him in her bosom, and became his nurse.

Now the father of Boaz was Salmon, and his mother was Rahab whose house was on the wall of Jericho. Afterwards Obed was the father of Jesse, and Jesse was the father of David the king.

57. THE MOTHER OF SAMUEL.

AT Ramah, in the mountains of Ephraim, lived a man named Elkanah who had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah was childless. Every year Elkanah went up with them, at the festival of green lodges, to worship and to sacrifice to the Lord of hosts at Shiloh, in the quiet plain hidden among the hills. When Elkanah had offered his sacrifice they would all sit down and feast; and he would give portions to Peninnah and her sons and daughters, but to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved her although she had no children. Yet for Hannah all the gladness was taken out of the feast by Peninnah, who made her childlessness very bitter to her. It was the same every year.

Now it happened once that when Peninnah wounded her, Hannah broke into tears and could not eat. Elkanah said to her, "Why art thou weeping, Hannah, and why art thou eating nothing? Wherefore dost thou grieve? Am I not more to thee than ten sons?" Hannah rose and left them eating and drinking and went into the tent of the Lord, and prayed to Him with tears in the bitterness of her heart. She made a vow and said, "O Lord of hosts, if Thou wilt deign to look on the affliction of Thy handmaid, if Thou wilt remember me and not forget Thy handmaid, but wilt give Thy handmaid a man child, I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his hair."

Now Eli, the aged high-priest, sat in his chair by one of the gold-plated pillars of the tent, and watched her praying; and when he saw her lips moving

passionately yet heard no sound of her voice (for she was speaking in her heart), he arose and rebuked her. Hannah said to him, "No, my lord, I have taken neither wine nor strong drink. But I am a woman sorrowful of spirit, and I have poured out my soul before the Lord." Then Eli said, "Go in peace; and may the God of Israel grant what thou hast asked Him in thy prayer." The pain was taken out of Hannah's heart. She went her way and returned to the feast and ate with them, and her face was quite changed.

So they returned to Ramah; and the Lord remembered her, and gave her a son, whom she called Samuel because she "asked him of God."

Each year the others attended the feast, but Hannah remained at home until the child was weaned. Then when he was about three or four years old, she went up again to Shiloh, and the little son with her, and she took for burnt-offerings and thank-offerings three bullocks and an ephah of flour and a skin of wine. She brought the child to Eli and said, "O my lord, as true as thou livest, I am the woman who stood near thee in this place praying to Jehovah. It was this child I prayed for, and God granted me my prayer. Therefore I now return to the Lord what I asked of Him; all his life this son of my asking shall be my return to the Lord."

So the child was left with Eli the high-priest, and he ministered in the tabernacle, wearing a little linen ephod. His mother made him a small priestly robe, and brought it to him from year to year when she came up to Shiloh with her husband for the yearly sacrifice.

Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife. Afterwards Hannah had other children—three sons and two daughters; and the little Levite grew on, and was dear both to the Lord and to men.

58. THE LOSS OF THE ARK.

THE sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas the priests, were sons of wickedness—they knew not the Lord, and though their father rebuked them, they paid no heed to his warnings.

In those days the Lord seldom spoke with men, and visions had ceased. Now it happened on a night that Eli, who had grown well-nigh sightless with age, lay sleeping in his place; the light of the seven-branched lamp-stand was not yet gone out, and Hannah's child slumbered beside the ark of God, when the Lord called him, "Samuel!" The lad answered, "I am here," and ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; thou wast calling." "I did not call thee, my son," Eli said; "go, and lie down again." A second and a third time the Lord called him, and he rose quickly and went to the aged priest; for the lad did not know the voice of the Lord, and His word had not yet been spoken to him. But Eli now perceived it was the Lord who was calling the child, and he said to him, "Go and lie down. If thou art called again, do thou answer, 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant hears.'"

So the lad went and lay down beside the ark, awake and listening. The Lord came, and stood over him, and called as before, "Samuel, Samuel!" Samuel answered, "Speak, for Thy servant hears." Then the Lord said, "Behold, I shall do a thing in Israel at which the two ears of whoso hears of it shall tingle"; and He told him of the doom which overhung the sons of Eli because of their wickedness, and Eli himself and all his house because of his weakness in dealing with them. "Neither sacrifice nor offering shall ever expiate their iniquity."

In the morning when Samuel opened the doors of the Lord's house, Eli called him and said, "What is it, my son, that the Lord has shown thee?" The lad was afraid to answer, but Eli besought him to hide nothing from him; and Samuel told him all that the

Lord had spoken. "It is the Lord," the old priest said; "let Him do what seems good to Him."

Samuel grew, and Jehovah was with him; and it was known from Dan to Beer-sheba that a prophet had arisen in the land.

No long time afterwards Israel went out in arms against the Philistines, but the Lord was not with them. They were defeated, and left four thousand dead upon the field. Then the princes of the tribes said, "Wherefore has Jehovah failed us this day? Fetch hither the ark of the Lord; let it come into our midst, and deliver us from our enemies." The ark of the Lord was brought up from Shiloh, and with the ark were Hophni and Phinehas, the wicked sons of Eli.

At its coming into the camp the hills rang with the shouting of Israel, but the Philistines were stricken with dread when they heard of it, for they thought that God was come into the camp of His people. "Woe to us!" they said; "who will save us from the hand of the mighty God which smote the Egyptians with all manner of plagues in the wilderness?" But their leaders rallied their spirits, "Pluck up heart, Philistines! Quit you this day like men, if you would not be slaves to the Hebrews."

They fought in the vale of Sorek. Israel fled routed. Immense was the overthrow, for thirty thousand of the fighting men of Israel fell by the sword. The ark of God was taken; the sons of Eli were slain.

Far away in Shiloh, by the wayside, sat in his priestly chair a man, blind and hoary, ninety and eight years old. It was Eli the high-priest, awaiting word of the battle, for his heart trembled for the ark of God. There came a fugitive, fleeing from the fight, his garments rent, his head strewn with earth. He told of the defeat, and out of Shiloh came a shrill crying. Eli heard it and asked, "Wherefore do they cry?" Thereupon the runner came on hastily, and Eli asked him, "What has happened, my son?" "Israel fled," the man answered; "there was mighty slaughter;



Ruth.

thy two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead; the ark of God is taken." As he spoke of the ark, Eli fell backward from his chair; his neck was broken and he died, for he was an old man and heavy.

That same hour his grandchild, the son of Phinehas, was born. The child's mother was distraught with grief. "The glory is departed from Israel," she said; "the ark of God is taken." She named the child Ichabod, "There is no glory." She turned her face from the babe and died.

Forty years had Eli been Judge in Israel.

The Philistines bore away the ark in triumph to Ashdod by the sea, and placed it in the house of their god Dagon. In the morning, when they came to worship, they found Dagon lying on his face before the ark of the Lord. They set him up again, but on the morrow, not only had he fallen, but they saw with dismay that his hands and his bearded head had been severed from his fish-like body, and lay on the threshold. Then the Lord struck the people with disease, and they clamoured to have the ark taken out from among them.

For seven months it was borne about the land—to Gath, to Ekron; to wheresoever it went, destruction and disease and death accompanied it with naked swords, until the lords of the Philistines cried out, "Send back the ark of the God of Israel before He has slain us and our people." The priests and diviners counselled them. They made a new cart, and laid the ark of God upon it, and a coffer containing jewels of gold as a trespass offering (for the priests said, "Do not send it away empty"); they took away the calves from two milch kine, and yoked the kine to the cart, and then let them go whither they would.

The kine moved away with the cart into the road which goes straight up to Beth-shemesh; they went along lowing for their young, but turned neither to the right nor to the left to find them. So the Philistines

knew that the God of Israel who led the kine had afflicted them, and that it was not merely an evil chance from which they had suffered.

The five lords of the Philistines followed the cart to the borders of Beth-shemesh, where Israel had been defeated. All the villagers of Beth-shemesh were in the valley reaping the wheat; they saw the ark and ran to it shouting with joy. The kine stood still beside a great stone in the field of Joshua, a Beth-shemite. The Levites took down the ark of the Lord and the coffer with the jewels of gold, and laid them on the great stone; the cart they broke up for fuel and the kine they sacrificed as a burnt-offering to the Lord. The five Philistine princes saw all that was done, and returned to Ekron.

In the midst of their rejoicing the Lord slew three score and ten of the men of Beth-shemesh for their profanity before the ark. The people exclaimed in their fear, "Who may stand in the presence of Jehovah, this holy God?" and they sent for the folk of Kirjath-jearim to come and take the ark away. So it was carried up to the Town of the Woods, and lodged in the house of Aminadab on the hill. There it abode a long time, for it was twenty years.

Then all the house of Israel were in sore distress because the Lord had forsaken them. Samuel said to them, "If you are indeed returning to Jehovah, cast away your strange gods and goddesses, and serve Him alone. Then He will deliver you from your enemies." He summoned a gathering of the people at Mizpeh. They came in a great multitude. They fasted, they confessed their sin against the Lord, they poured out water as though it were the sorrow of their souls.

When the Philistines heard of the great gathering they marched up against Mizpeh. From that green hill, "the watch-tower," which looks out even to the Great Sea, the people saw them coming and were afraid. But the armed men of Israel stood fast and

entreated Samuel, "Do thou without ceasing beseech Jehovah our God for us."

Samuel took a lamb for a burnt-offering, and as the smoke of it went up into the heavens he called upon the Lord God. At that moment the hosts closed in battle. The Lord answered Samuel with the voice of His thunder. That mighty thundering the Philistines knew for the wrath of the Lord fighting against them. They broke and fled, and Israel pursued them and hewed them down as far as Beth-car, "the house of the lamb."

Thus was Israel delivered. Samuel set up near Mizpeh "the stone of help," Eben-ezer, for "Thus far," he said, "the Lord has helped us."

As long as Samuel was alive the hand of Jehovah was turned against the Philistines.

59. THE KINGSHIP OF SAUL.

ALL his days Samuel was Judge in Israel. He judged in Beth-el, Gilgal and Mizpeh, but his home was in Ramah, and there he built an altar to the Lord. When he had grown old he made his sons Judges, but they were corrupt men, receiving bribes and perverting justice. The princes of Israel came to Samuel and said, "Thou art now an aged man, and thy sons do not walk in thy ways. Let us therefore have a king to judge us, to lead us, to fight our battles, like all the nations round." Samuel warned them of the evils of the sceptred hand. They would cry out against the tyranny they had chosen, but Jehovah would not help them. The people persisted; "Nay," they said, "but a king over us we will have." The Lord said to Samuel, "Make them a king"; and afterwards, "To-morrow I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him leader of my people."

Now there was a man in the land of Benjamin, rich and valiant, whose name was Kish, and his son,

Saul, was of great stature and princely bearing; and it happened that his she-asses strayed from the pastures, and Kish sent his son with a bondman to seek for them. Through the mountains of Ephraim and through Shalisha and Shalim they went, but could not find them. They came to Ramah in the land of Zuph, and Saul said, "Let us go back, or my father may be more anxious for us than for the asses." "There is a seer in this place," said the bondman, "a man of God, and all he foretells comes true; maybe he will let us know which way to take." "What is there to give him?" asked Saul, "for all our store is done." "I have a quarter shekel of silver," said the bondman, "I will give him that." "Good," said Saul, and they went up to Ramah. They met girls going to the well for water, and these told them that Samuel was in Ramah. As they went in through the gate they saw a stately greybeard in priestly garments. It was Samuel, and as his eyes fell on Saul, the Lord said to him, "This is the man of whom I spoke; he shall reign over my people."

Saul approached the old priest and said, "I pray thee tell me which is the house of the seer." "I am the seer," Samuel answered; "go up now before me to the high place of sacrifice, for thou shalt eat with me this day, and to-morrow I will let thee depart. As to the asses which were lost three days ago, let them not trouble thee; they are found. And for whom is kept all that is precious in Israel, if not for thee and thy father's house?" "I am of Benjamin," replied Saul, "one of the least of the tribes of Israel, and my house is the least of the houses of Benjamin—why dost thou say these things to me?"

Samuel made no answer, but he led them into the hall near the altar on the hill, gave them place of honour among the thirty guests invited to the feast, and set before Saul the choice portion which had been reserved for him. That night he and Saul talked together in the secrecy of the house-top. At dawn he woke Saul,

and they went out together. "Send on thy bondman," he said when they came to the town-end, "but stay thou till I declare the Lord's will to thee."

He brought forth a vial of oil and poured it on Saul's head, and kissed him; and when Saul stared at him in amazement, he said, "Hath not Jehovah anointed thee to be the leader of His inheritance?" But the brows of the great-statured man were knitted in doubt, and Samuel said, "Take these things then for a sign. When thou art gone hence two men, beside Rachel's tomb, will tell thee that the asses are found, and that thy father is now anxious on thy account. At the terebinth of Tabor thou shalt meet three men going up to God at Beth-el with three kids and three loaves and a skin of wine; they will greet thee and give thee two of the loaves. When thou art come to the hill of Gibeah thou shalt see a company of prophets descending from the high place with lute and tambourine and flute and harp."

So it all fell out; and when Saul came to the hill the spirit of God was kindled like fire within him; he prophesied with the prophets, and was changed into another man.

Then Samuel summoned a gathering of the people at Mizpeh, to draw lots before the Lord for the kingship. The lot of the tribes fell upon Benjamin; the lot of the houses fell on the house of Matri; the lot of the men of Matri fell on Saul, the son of Kish. But Saul had hidden himself among the wagons and baggage. There they found him, and when men saw his comeliness and his noble stature towering above them, and heard Samuel saying, "See the man Jehovah has chosen; there is not one like him in Israel," a shout went up from the people, "God save the king!"

Samuel recited to the people the manner of rule, the rights and duties of a nation and their sovereign, and all that he spoke he wrote down in a book which he laid up in the ark of God. Saul returned home to Gibeah with a great following of brave men whose

hearts God had touched. But there were rebellious spirits, sons of Belial, who flouted Saul, "What! this fellow our deliverer?" and brought him no loyal present. But to these Saul turned a deaf ear.

Soon afterwards there was a cry out of Jabesh in Gilead, "Come to our rescue, or in seven days Nahash, the Serpent of Ammon, will enslave us, and put out our right eyes to show his scorn of Israel." Saul roused the tribes, fell upon the Ammonites, slew and chased them out of the region of Gilead. The people were stirred by the gallant feat. "Where," they asked, "are the men who said, 'Shall Saul reign over us?'" They would have put them to death. But Saul interposed; "No man shall lose his life this day," he said, "for this day Jehovah has wrought a deliverance in Israel." An assemblage of all the people was held at Gilgal. Saul was again proclaimed king; sacrifices were offered to the Lord, and there was great and joyful feasting.

Now the brave days of independence seemed drawing near. The king enrolled three thousand fighting men, but the daring capture of a Philistine garrison by his son Jonathan brought up that ancient enemy with their chariots and horsemen. At the sight of that mighty host the men of Israel hid themselves in caves and thickets and grain-pits, and the war-horns of the king rang through the land in vain.

The Philistines occupied Michmash, and sent out bands of raiders. Saul, with a handful of men—a pitiful great-hearted six hundred—encamped under the pomegranate tree of Migron, "the precipice," near Geba. The Passage of Michmash, a long deep gorge through the hills, divided the combatants.

Opposite to Geba the precipitous wall of the gorge rose into a sheer cliff. It was the end of a ridge held by an outpost of the Philistine horde. As Jonathan looked at the high ruddy cliff shining in the sun, he said to his armour-bearer, "Come, let us up to this outpost of the heathens. It may be Jehovah will

speed us. As easy it is for Him to save by few as by many." "Good," said his companion, "I am with thee, heart and hand." "See," said Jonathan, "let us take this for a sign. When these heathens see us, if they say, 'Wait till we come down to you,' we shall go no further; but if they say, 'Come up,' up we shall go; the Lord will have given them over to us."

Hand and foot, the two scaled the sheer cliff. One of the sentinels spied them; "Look," he said, "these Hebrews are creeping out of their holes"; the other jeered at them, "Come up, and we will let you know!" Concealed by the jutting rocks, Jonathan reached the summit and leaped upon the sentinels. His companion followed. There was scarce time to give the alarm before twenty of the guard had fallen; the rest fled, and the heroes chased them with deadly arrows and sling-stones. The vast camp of the Philistines was seized with panic; the ground under their feet rocked with earthquake; the terror of the God of Israel dispersed them in a wild rout of chariots and footmen overriding and beating each other down.

The sentinels at Migron saw the seething tumult among their foes. The six hundred answered the roll-call, and Jonathan and his armour-bearer were absent. Then Saul understood, and started in haste for Michmash. As the Philistines fled, the Hebrews forced to serve in their ranks turned their swords against their masters. The Israelites hidden among the mountains swept down in fierce pursuit. The running battle rolled away to the west.

As the six hundred passed through a wood, honey of the wild bees streamed from the combs on the branches, but no one dared put hand to mouth, for Saul had pronounced a death-curse on the men who stayed to eat before evening. Only Jonathan, wearied and faint, thrust his spear into a honey-comb, and tasted it: but he knew nothing of the curse.

From Michmash to Ajalon they slaughtered the Philistines that day. When Saul would have con-

tinued the pursuit through the night, the priest Ahijah said, "Let us ask the Lord." But Jehovah gave no answer, and Saul knew that some one had sinned. Lots were drawn to discover the guilty, and the lot fell on Jonathan. "What hast thou done?" Saul asked him, "for thy doom is death." "I tasted a little honey with the end of my spear," said Jonathan, "and behold, I must die." But the people would not suffer it; "Shall Jonathan die? God forbid. Not one hair of his head shall fall to the ground. This day he has wrought with God to save Israel." So Jonathan was rescued, and the pursuit ended.

After this Saul fought many a stout battle with his enemies. On a day Samuel came to him and said, "The Lord remembers how Amalek vexed His people in the wilderness; wherefore He bids thee destroy Amalek utterly and all they have; thou shalt spare no living creature." From Havilah to the Wall of Egypt Saul swept like fire over Amalek; but Agag their king he saved alive in chains, and the best of their lambs and sheep and oxen he brought back to sacrifice in Gilgal. Samuel said to him, "Why didst thou disobey the voice of the Lord? Behold, obedience is better than sacrifice, and good-heed than burnt-offerings. Because thou hast rejected the commands of Jehovah, He has rejected thee as king over Israel."

"I have sinned," said Saul, "because I feared the people and obeyed their will. Pardon my sin, and go with me that I may worship the Lord." "I will not go with thee," Samuel answered. As he turned away, Saul caught hold of his mantle. The mantle rent in his hand, and Samuel said, "The Lord has rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day." Then Samuel bade them bring out Agag, the king of Amalek; and with his own hand the stern old prophet hewed him in pieces.

Never again did Samuel look on Saul with his living eyes; nevertheless he mourned over Saul because the Lord had rejected him.

60. DAVID OF THE SONGS.

THERE came a day that the Lord said to Samuel, "When wilt thou cease mourning over Saul? Fill thy horn with oil, for I am sending thee to Jesse the Beth-lehemite; among his sons have I seen him whom I would have king."

Now Jesse was the grandson of Ruth the Moabitess, and as Samuel came to Beth-lehem he looked down into the fields in which she gleaned and saw the threshing-floor on which Boaz slept among the sheaves. As his eyes lighted on Eliab, the eldest son of Jesse, he said to himself, "This indeed is the Lord's anointed," but Jehovah whispered in his soul, "Heed not his bearing, nor his lofty stature; God looks at the heart." Then Jesse called Abinadab and Shammah, and each of his seven sons, but Samuel said, "Nay, on none of these has the Lord fixed. Are these all thy sons?" "There is still another, a stripling," answered Jesse; "but he is keeping the sheep." "Fetch him hither," said Samuel; "we sit not down to eat until he is come."

They brought David from the folds. Winsome and tall he was, with russet-gold hair, and the eyes and the beauty of Ruth. The Lord said to Samuel, "Up! anoint him; it is he"; and Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed the shepherd-lad. From that hour and afterwards the spirit of the Lord was with David.

So Samuel departed, and went his way to Ramah; and David returned to his life in the four winds and under all the splendours of the heavens. With the music of harp and voice he led his flocks through the woods and over the high downs; with sling and club he protected them; he remembered all their faces, he gave them names, and they all knew his call. Everything he saw and heard and cared for seemed to come and make an abiding-place in his songs. There was the long rain-pool in the rocky wady, the fresh grass growing round it, the still flock drinking the still water.

The stork went flying to her house in the fir-trees, but never flew out of the song; the conies looked up startled among the boulders, but never darted away. The sun kept going down, but was always glowing low in the west; the moon and stars sailed in heaven, but never disappeared. And yonder was the sea, great and wide; and there the distant ships were passing, but never passed. Everything was living as in a mirror, and the mirror was David's delight in thinking of Jehovah, the God of Israel, so that his songs were songs of peace of heart and enchantment.

But the spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul. In its place a dread of nameless misfortunes clouded his mind, and he sat distraught in his darkened tent. It was an evil spirit from God, they said, that troubled him; sweet music perchance might appease it. Some one remembered the shepherd-lad and his songs; David was sent for, and at the first sight of his russet-gold hair and winsome eyes the king loved him. When the evil spirit descended upon Saul, David played and sang to him; his troubled mind was healed, and the evil spirit left him.

Once more the Philistines gathered their forces against Israel. They came up from Gath by the Vale of Terebinths (the highway cloven by nature into the mountains), and encamped on the low hills of Shochoh. The slopes on the other side of the valley were held by Saul and his host. A mountain stream ran down the valley between them.

Day after day the champion of the Philistines, one of the old giant race of the Anakim, came down to the stream in huge bronze helmet, corselet and greaves, and challenged Israel to single combat; but in Saul's camp there was no mighty man of valour who dared meet him.

Now three of Jesse's sons, Eliab, Abinadab and Shammah, were with Saul, and Jesse said to David of the songs, "Run, lad, with this parched corn and these

loaves to thy brothers, and bring us word how they fare in the camp; and take these ten cheeses for the captain of their thousand." So David sped across the high moors to the laager, left his burden with the baggage warden, and hastened to greet his brothers. While he was talking with them, Goliath the champion of Gath, came forth in his clanking mail, with a spear huge as a weaver's beam in his hand, and proclaimed his challenge. "Who is this heathen Philistine," asked David, "that he defies the army of the living God?" The men around told him; "And a happy day will it be," said they, "for the man that slays him! Treasure shall he have, and the king's daughter, and his father's house shall be free of tax and toll."

But Eliab turned scornfully on David. "What brings thee here?" he said; "Where hast thou left thy handful of sheep? I know thee and thy truant ways." "What have I done now?" asked David; "Had I no errand?" And he turned away to question the soldiers. Word of this matter reached Saul, and when David was brought before the king, "Let no one be down-hearted," the lad said, "because of this Philistine; thy servant will fight him." Saul looked at David, but did not remember the young minstrel who had healed him of his madness. "How canst thou fight him?" he said; "Thou art but a youth; he is a tried warrior." "Ay, lord," David answered; "yet once while I kept my father's sheep, a lion and a bear took a lamb, and thy servant slew both bear and lion. The Lord who saved me from them will save me from this Philistine." "Go then," said Saul, "and the Lord be with thee."

The king would fain have arrayed him in his own armour, but David said, "I cannot fight in these"; and forth he went with but his staff and his sling; and coming to the stream in the valley, he chose five smooth flat stones, such as strike on edge in the hand of a master-slinger, and put them in his scrip.

Red with rage was Goliath of the giant race when

he saw the fair lad in the bloom of his youth. "Am I a dog," he cried, "that thou comest against me with staves?" and he cursed David by all his gods. Said David, "Thou comest with sword and spear and javelin; I come in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel. I will take thy head from thee; I will give the flesh of the Philistines to the jackals and the vultures, so that all the earth may know there is a God in Israel, and He can save without sword or spear." Then David ran to meet the Philistine. As he ran he took a stone from his scrip, and slung it. The stone smote Goliath between the eyes. The giant stopped short, shuddered, and fell headlong. David sprang upon him, plucked his sword from the sheath, and hewed his head from his shoulders.

For a moment the Philistines stood as if turned to stone, then they fled aghast. A mighty shout went up from the men of Israel and Judah, and the pursuit began. They chased them to the gates of Gath and Ekron, and all the long way through the wadys and across the plain was strewn with heathen dead.

After the victory Abner brought David to the king, with the head of the Philistine in his hands. "Whose son art thou?" asked Saul. "I am the son of thy servant, Jesse the Beth-lehemite," David answered. Then, perhaps, some recollection of the fair shepherd-lad whom he had loved and the enchanted music which lifted the darkness from his brain may have glimmered in the king's mind. "Thou shalt remain with me, and be my man," said Saul; "I cannot spare thee to thy father's house." And as Jonathan looked on that gallant face, and felt the spell of those deep eyes, he loved David as he loved his own soul. He stripped off his princely robe and cast it over David's shoulders, he gave him his jewelled girdle, his victorious sword, his unerring bow. So these two were knit soul to soul in a brother-love beyond the love of brotherhood.

For a time all went well. The king made David

captain of his guards, and the hero-lad went in and out, a darling of the people. When he returned from daring frays on the Philistine borders, the young women came forth from the cities of Israel with music and dancing to welcome king Saul and his young warrior, and they answered one another in song :

“ Saul has slain his thousands ”—

“ And David his tens of thousands ! ”

Those words were a bitter hearing for the king. His face clouded and he looked with sidelong eyes at David. “ Already,” he said, “ he overtops me in the people’s praise; what is left for him to take but the kingdom ? ” Fear darkened his soul, for he knew that the Lord was with David, but that from himself He was departed.

On the morrow the evil spirit from God took hold of him, and when David stood playing before him as of old, Saul muttered to himself, “ I will nail him to the wall,” and twice he hurled his javelin, and twice David avoided the stroke. From that day and afterwards Saul hated David and sought to take his life.

Jonathan was grieved in his soul, and said to his father, “ Let not the king sin against his servant David. No wrong has he done thee; nay, he risked his life in thy cause when he slew the Philistine. Thou didst see it, and rejoice—why then wilt thou spill innocent blood ? ” Saul was moved by his son’s words and answered, “ By God’s life, he shall not be slain.” But the black moods came back upon the king, and David saw that there was but a step between him and death.

The day before the new moon David said to Jonathan, “ What have I done? Wherein have I been guilty that thy father lies in wait for my life ? ” “ God forbid ! ” said Jonathan. “ Thou shalt see,” David replied. “ Neither to-morrow nor the day after will I sit down at the king’s feast. If he miss me at all, say that I besought thee to let me go to Beth-lehem,

for it is the yearly sacrifice in my father's house. Should he say, 'It is well,' thy servant need not fear; but if he be angered, be sure that his thoughts are set on evil. Then show thy affection to thy servant since our souls are knit in brother-love before the Lord." "As the Lord lives," said Jonathan, "so it shall be. Come on the third day early and hide thyself near yonder cairn. I will shoot three arrows, and thou wilt hear what I say to the little lad who gathers them."

So David lay out on the moors; and on the second day of the moon the king said to Jonathan, "Why has not the son of Jesse come to table, neither yesterday nor to-day?" Jonathan told him how he had prayed for leave to go to Beth-lehem for the yearly sacrifice; "and thus it is that his place at the king's table is empty." Then the king's eyes blazed with fury. "Son of the perverse and rebellious woman," he cried, "do I not know that to thy shame and thy mother's thou art the sworn friend of the son of Jesse? While he walks the world no security is there for thee or thy kingdom. Away and bring him hither; death is his doom." "Why should he die?" replied Jonathan; "what has he done?" Saul's answer was a flying javelin. Jonathan sprang up from table in fierce anger and departed. He knew that his father was set on David's death, and he broke no bread that day for sorrow.

In the early morning he went out of Gibeah into the open, and he said to the lad, "Run, and fetch the arrows I shoot." As the lad ran, he shot three arrows beyond the cairn. When the lad came to the first, Jonathan called to him, "Are not the arrows beyond thee? Go further"; and again he called, "Be quick, make haste, do not linger." The lad gathered up the arrows and returned to his master, and Jonathan gave him his bow and quiver and said, "Take them back into the town."

There was no one in sight, and David came out from his hiding-place, and bowed down to the ground three

times. And these two kissed each other and wept together, and David wept very bitterly. Then Jonathan said, "Go in peace. We two have sworn that the Lord shall be between us, between me and thee and between thy children and my children for ever."

61. JONATHAN AND SAUL.

So they parted, and David fled southward. He came to the tent of the Lord, which was now on the high-place at Nob, and begged the priest to give him arms. The sword of Goliath, wrapped in the giant's cloak, hung as a trophy in the tabernacle. "If thou wilt take that, take it," said the priest; "spear or sword there is no other." "There is none like it," said David, "give it me."

Thenceforth, for many a day, he was an outlaw in the woods and rocky wilds of Judah.

His kinsfolk joined him, to escape Saul's malice. Around him gathered all the oppressed and discontented in the kingdom—debtors in danger of being sold for slaves, desperate men with wrongs to avenge, young adventurers eager to plunder the Philistines. In a little while he was captain of four hundred, sons of the bow and spear, mighty men whose faces were the faces of lions, whose feet were swift as the roes upon the mountains. And day by day their number increased.

Now it chanced when David was in his hold (a lone rounded hill it was in the Vale of Terebinths, no great way from Shochoh where Goliath fell, and high up on the hill was the cave of Adullam, which seven swords might keep against a host), there was a Philistine garrison in Beth-lehem and the Philistines were camped in the Valley of the Giants. And at evening a great longing came upon him, and "Oh!" he said, "that one would give me to drink of the water of the well which is by the gate of Beth-lehem!" Three of the mightiest of the mighty men heard him—Abishai, his sister's son, Benaiah who slew the lion in the cistern

in that winter of the snow, and a third whose name has been forgotten. Through the late summer night they sped; passed through the dying watch-fires and the sleeping camp of the enemy; and filling a water-skin at the well beside the gate, were back at the hold again with the sunrise.

They took the water to David, but he would not drink of it. "Banish the thought, O Lord!" he said, "for this is the blood of the men who went in hazard of their lives"; and he poured it out upon the rock as an offering to Jehovah.

It was harvest time. Bands of Philistines ascended from the valley to pillage the threshing-floors of Keilah. David spied them from his rock, swooped down upon them, saved the harvest and the town. While he lingered there the Lord warned him, "Thou art shut in with gates and bars; Saul is on his way to take thee; these townsmen will betray thee." At daybreak on the morrow he and his six hundred were out in the four winds.

They came to the wilderness of Ziph, and Jonathan met him in the forest. "Soul of my soul," he said, "fear not. The hand of Saul my father shall not reach thee. Thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next thee in thy kingdom. And that too my father knows." They renewed once more the pledge of their brother-love; then they kissed each other with tears and parted; and never did these two lovers look into each other's eyes again.

Day after day the treacherous peasants brought the king word of the outlaws, and Saul pursued them with sleepless hatred. But David and his men flitted like shadows from Ziph into the wilderness of Maon, and from Maon into the wilderness of En-gedi, whose cliffs hang over the Dead Sea. A high heart David kept in his troubles. His men woke and marvelled at the sound of his harp and the voice of his singing as the first light touched with red the mountains of Moab:

“ Be gracious to me, O God, be gracious,
For the trust of my soul is in Thee !
In the shadow of Thy wings is my refuge,
Until these calamities be overpast.

Steadfast is my heart, O God, my heart is steadfast ;
I will sing and I will play.
Awake, my soul ; awake, lute and harp ;
The dawn I will awaken !

Among the peoples will I praise Thee,
I will sing of Thee among the nations,
How Thy goodness is great as the heavens,
And Thy truth as high as the clouds.”

The Lord was with David in the wilderness, and saved him from his persecutor. Once indeed He delivered Saul into his hands, for when the king sought for him at the sheep-folds among the Rocks of the Ibex, David stood beside him in the darkness with a drawn sword. “ But God forbid,” he said, “ that I should lift my hand against the anointed of Jehovah ! ”

In these days Samuel died. They buried him in the garden of his house at Ramah, and the children of Israel mourned for him.

After a time David went up into Hachilah, “ the hill of drought,” which is over against the House of Desolation. The men of Ziph quickly carried word to Saul, and the king hastened into the wilderness with three thousand men and Abner the captain of his host. At nightfall David looked down from a hill, and saw the watch-fires round the king’s camp. Said he, “ Who will go down with me to Saul this night ? ” “ That will I,” said his sister’s son, Abishai, the young lion-faced man.

So these two went out into the night of stars, crossed the deep gorge below them, stole into the laager, and came to the king’s tent. Saul lay sleeping, with his long spear stuck in the ground at his head and a cruse of water by his side. “ God has delivered thy enemy into thy hand,” whispered Abishai, the son of Zeruah. “ Let me nail him straightway to the earth

with his spear; I shall not strike him twice." "Nay, do not destroy him," said David. "Who can lift hand without guilt against Jehovah's anointed? By the Lord's life, the Lord alone shall smite him, whether when his day comes and he dies, or when he descends to the battle and perishes there. Take but the spear at his head and the water-cruse, and let us away." So they got them out of the camp; and no man saw them, or knew of it, or awoke from the deep sleep which the Lord had cast upon them.

In the clearness of the morning David stood on the hill-top, with the deep gorge between, and halloo'd the men in the camp and Abner. "Dost thou not answer, Abner?" he cried. "Who art thou," said Abner, "that dost clamour in the king's ear?" But David replied, "Art thou not a stalwart? Where is the like of thee in Israel? Why then hast thou not watched over thy lord, the king? One of the people went in to slay the king, thy lord. That is not a good thing thou hast done. God's life, death should be thy doom for so misguarding thy lord, the anointed of Jehovah! See now where the king's spear is, and the water-cruse that lay by his couch!"

Saul knew David's voice, and he stood before his tent and said, "Is that thy voice, my son David?" "My voice, O king and my lord," David answered. "Why is it that my lord is ever pursuing his servant? What have I done? Wherein am I guilty? Let the king now hear the words of his servant! If it be the evil spirit from God that stirs thee against me, I pray thee beseech the Lord to accept a sacrifice at thy hand. But if it be men, accursed before the Lord may they be who cast me out this day from the heritage of Jehovah, and bid me go and serve strange gods! God grant that my blood fall not into the earth far from the face of Jehovah, for the king of Israel is come out to hunt one solitary partridge upon the mountains."

Said Saul, "I have sinned. Come back, David my son; no harm shall I do thee more, seeing that my

life has this day been precious in thy eyes. I have been as one distraught, and my guilt is very great.” “Here is the king’s spear,” said David; “let one of the young men come over and take it. To each of us God will repay according to His justice and His truth. As thy life has been this day very precious in my eyes, so in the Lord’s eyes shall my life be, and He will deliver me from all distress.” The king said, “Blessed be thou, David my son! Thou shalt prosper and prevail.”

And David went upon his way.

62. “ O MOUNTAINS OF GILBOA.”

BUT to his own heart he said, “One day I shall assuredly perish by the hand of Saul; what better can I do than pass into the land of the Philistines where Saul cannot follow?” So he went down to Gath with his six hundred, became a vassal of the king, Achish, and had Ziklag for his city. Thence from his three hills he swept out in many a foray upon Amalek, the ancient foe, and the restless tribes of the desert.

When a year and more had gone by, war broke out again between the Philistines and Israel. Achish came up along the sea by the way of the merchants into the great green plain of Esdraclon, and encamped at the village of Shunem. The tribes of Israel held the slopes of Gilboa, above the deep valley of Jezreel. As Saul looked down on the mighty horde of his foes with their chariots and horsemen, his heart trembled with dread. If only he could know that Jehovah would once more deliver His people. But God gave him no answer. He heard no voice, he beheld no vision in his brief and broken sleep. Samuel was dead. He had massacred the priests of the Lord at Nob, all but Abiathar, and Abiathar had fled to David with the sacred Urim and Thummim. To whom should he turn for counsel? In his despair he said to his courtiers, “Find me a woman who can call up the dead.” “There

is such a woman," they said, "at En-dor beyond the hill of Moreh."

The king set out in disguise with two of his warriors, and came to the woman by night. "Foretell me what is to come," he said, "call up the dead for me, show me him that I shall tell thee." But the woman was afraid. "Thou knowest," she said, "how Saul slew the wizards and necromancers out of the land; why dost thou lay a snare for my life?" Saul swore by the Lord that no harm should happen to her. The woman said, "Whom shall I call up for thee?" "Call up Samuel," Saul answered.

When the woman beheld Samuel, she uttered a loud cry. "Why hast thou deceived me?" she asked; "Thou art Saul." "Be not afraid," said the king. "What dost thou see?" "I see a god ascending out of the earth." "What is his form?" "It is an aged man who comes up; he is covered with a mantle." Saul knew therefore that it was Samuel, and he bowed himself down to the ground.

Samuel said to the king, "Why dost thou disturb me, troubling my rest?" "I am in great distress," Saul answered. "The Philistines make war upon me. God is departed from me; He answers me no more, whether by prophets or by dreams. Wherefore I have called thee, to tell me what I should do." "Why dost thou ask me," said Samuel, "when Jehovah has departed from thee and is become thy enemy? He has rent the kingdom from thee and given it to another, to David. He will deliver the host of Israel into the hands of the Philistines, and to-morrow thou and thy sons shall be with me."

Then fell Saul all his length upon the ground, and he lay without force, for all that day and all the night he had taken no food. The woman laid meat before him, and his warriors besought him to eat; and when they had eaten they went their way in the darkness.

All day long the battle raged in the great plain on

the morrow, but as it drew to evening the men of Israel broke and fled, and the Philistines pursued them and cut them down on the slopes of Gilboa. Jonathan fell and his brothers Abinadab and Melchi-shua. The kingly form of Saul stood on the hill-side, leaning heavily on his long spear, for he had been grievously wounded by the archers. The chariots and horsemen were pressing hard upon him. All was lost. “ Draw thy sword,” he said to his weapon-bearer, “ and drive it through me, lest these heathen do me shame.” But the weapon-bearer dared not. Then Saul took a sword, held it hilt earthward, and fell upon it. When the weapon-bearer saw that he was dead, then he too fell on his sword and died with him.

When the folk of Naphtali and Zebulun beheld that utter defeat, they fled from their towns and the Philistines went and took possession of them.

The next day at dawn the conquerors stripped the slain. They sent Saul’s head to tell the good news to their gods and their people. Then they set it in the house of Dagon at Ashdod; his armour they hung in the house of Astarté at Ashkelon; his body and the bodies of his sons they fixed to the wall of Beth-shan. But the valiant men of Jabesh in Gilead, when they heard the tidings, remembered what Saul had done for them. All night they went on swift feet to Beth-shan, took down the bodies from the wall, brought them home, and burnt them. Their bones they buried under the ancient tamarisk of Jabesh, and for seven days they fasted in sorrow for the dead.

On the third day there came one running from Gilboa, with clothes rent and earth on his head and brought to David the royal turban and the bracelet which the king wore on his arm. With a liar’s mouth he told how Saul had prayed him to end his life and how he had slain him. David and the mighty men with him rent their garments at the tale; and they wept for Saul and for Jonathan and for the people of the Lord laid low in battle, and fasted in sorrow until

sundown. Then David said to him who brought the news, "Whence art thou?" "I am the son of a stranger, of an Amalekite," was the answer. "How wast thou not afraid," asked David, "to destroy the anointed of Jehovah?" He called to one of his young men, "Step forth and kill him"; and the young man struck the Amalekite dead.

And David made a dirge for Saul and Jonathan. It was taught to the little children in Judah, and these were the words they sang for many a day:

"The flower of Israel has perished on thy hills.
How are the heroes fallen!

Tell it not in Gath,
Cry it not in Ashkelon streets,
Lest the daughters of the Philistine sing for joy,
Lest they dance for joy, the daughters of the heathen.

O mountains of Gilboa,
May no dew come upon you, no rain,
No field bear even an offering of first-fruits!
For there the shields of the heroes were soiled with shame—
The shield of Saul, once dressed with oil for the onset!

Jonathan's bow drank the blood of heroes;
The sword of Saul came never home fasting.

Saul and Jonathan!
They in their lives were lovable and loving,
They in their death were not divided.
Swifter than eagles they were,
They were stronger than lions.

Daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,
Who clothed you in the delight of scarlet,
Who decked your raiment with gold.

How are the heroes fallen in the brunt of the battle!
How has Jonathan perished on thy hills!

My heart, Jonathan, aches for thee, my brother
Thou wast all my bliss to me.
Thy love for me was wonderful,
Passing the love of women.

How are the heroes fallen—
The sword and the bow of Israel broken!"

63. THE CITY OF DAVID.

THE days of exile and vassalage were ended. With his six hundred warriors, their households, their flocks and herds, David marched up to Hebron and was anointed king by the princes of Judah. Abner, true to his dead master, passed over Jordan with Esh-baal, the last of the sons of Saul, and made him king over Gilead,—king too, as the great captain drove the Philistines back to their old borders, over Asher and Jezreel, over Ephraim and Benjamin, over the whole of Israel.

Then followed a long war between the houses of Saul and David, but the house of Saul waned as David grew ever stronger. Abner was ruthlessly slain by Joab and Abishai in revenge for the death of their brother Asahel; Esh-baal was murdered as he lay unguarded in his noontide slumber. The people of Israel turned to the one shining figure that survived. The princes of the tribes came to him at Hebron. "Behold," they said, "we are thy bones and thy flesh. Even in times gone by, when Saul was our king, it was thou who didst lead Israel to battle and bring them home in triumph. The Lord then said to thee, 'Thou shalt shepherd my people, and shalt be captain in Israel.'" So the princes anointed David king over Israel. He was thirty years old, in the flower of his strength, with his russet-gold hair clustering on his kingly shoulders, and something of the heart of Ruth reigning in his eyes.

And now the king needed for his capital a city, neither of Israel nor of Judah, which should bind the tribes together into one nation. For many a vanished age Jebus, the stronghold of an ancient folk of the land, had stood on the heights of Zion. It had never been captured. It was deemed impregnable. David encamped on the northern plateau and called the men of Jebus to surrender. They pointed to their gods which they had ranged on the wall and laughed him to derision. "They have eyes, but see not," said the king; "feet

they have, but walk not; and they that made and trust in them are like them"; and he proclaimed through the host, "He shall be my chief captain who goes up by the water-course, and smites the Jebusites and these blind and lame gods which my soul hates." Joab, his sister Zeruiah's son, scaled the wall; the impregnable stronghold was taken, and Jebus became the city of David.

The fame of those things spread through the land. Hiram, king of Tyre, proffered David his friendship, and sent him cedar-trees and carpenters and stone-cutters to build him a royal house. When the new city had been made strong and beautiful, David desired to fetch the ark of the Lord from the Town of the Woods, where it had lain for twenty years in the house of Aminadab on the hill. As they brought it on its way to the sound of harps and horns and cymbals, the oxen stumbled. Uzzah, son of Aminadab, thought the cart was overturning, stretched out a rash hand, and held the ark. The next moment he fell dead as though struck by lightning, for the Lord was angry that he had touched it.

In his dread of the holy God David would take the ark no further. It was left with a Philistine, Obed-edom of Gath, one of the king's men. As long as it remained under his roof Jehovah blessed Obed-edom and all his house; so that David took heart again, and went down a second time. Now the ark was borne by its staves on the shoulders of Levites. Great choirs of singers and minstrels with harps and cymbals went sounding before it. The king, the princes of Israel, the captains of the thousands marched with it.

Up the rocky steep they came, with great shouts of gladness and the calling of the silver trumpets, to the gates of the ancient stronghold. Then were heard the voices of the priests responding to each other:

"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?
Who shall stand in His holy place?"

He that hath clean hands and a pure heart,
Who doth not give his soul over to lying,
And who doth not swear to deceive.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates,
Be ye lift up, ye centuried doors;
And the King of glory shall come in !

Who is this—‘ the King of glory ’ ?

Jehovah, strong and mighty,
Jehovah, mighty in battle.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates,
Be ye lift up, ye centuried doors;
And the King of glory shall come in !

Who is He—‘ the King of glory ’ ?

Jehovah of hosts, He is the King of glory ! ”

They entered the city. The king, in a robe of white byssus and white linen ephod, danced joyfully before the ark until it was set in its place in the rich tent which he had spread for it.

Then ascended the smoke of the burnt-offerings and peace-offerings into the bright heavens. In that great feast of a renewed Israel, with the Lord God of their fathers in their midst, every man and every woman had a share. And David blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts.

64. “ ONE LITTLE EWE LAMB. ”

SITTING at peace in his house, the king said to Nathan the prophet, “ Look you, here am I dwelling in a house of cedar; the ark of God rests in a tent. ” Nathan said, “ Do what is in thy heart. ” But that night the word of the Lord came to the prophet, and He bade him say to David, “ I have walked long with Israel and in many places, yet when have I said, ‘ Why do you not build me a house of cedar ? ’ Nay, it is the Lord who will make thee a house; and when thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy son after thee. He will build a house to my name. I shall be

his father, and he shall be my son. If he do evil, I will chastise him with the rod of men, but my pity shall not forsake him."

Then David conquered the nations around him—the Philistines, Moab, the Syrians of Damascus, Zobah, Edom; and the spoil taken in gold and silver and bronze he dedicated to Jehovah. He sent beyond Jordan for Merib-baal, the son of Jonathan, the last of his house. At the defeat of Gilboa Merib-baal was a child, and his nurse, fleeing with him, let him fall, so that he was lame for life. For love of Jonathan, David gave him a place at his own table, restored to him all Saul's estates, and made Saul's freedman, Ziba, with his fifteen sons, his land-steward.

Now in the springtime of the year, when Joab was beleaguering Rabbah in the land of Ammon, David was in Jerusalem; and it happened, as he walked to and fro on the roof of the king's house in the breeze of the evening, that he saw a woman of such wonderful beauty that he desired to make her his wife. He was told that she was Bath-sheba, the wife of one of his mighty men, Uriah of the sons of Heth. He sent to Rabbah for Uriah, questioned him of Joab's welfare and of the siege and of the people; and for two days he entertained him. Each night Uriah slept with the guards at the king's gate, "for," said the mighty man, "the ark of God, and Israel and Judah are under the green bough, and my lord Joab is in the open field—how then shall I take my ease in my house?"

Then David sent him back to the siege with a letter, in which he bade Joab set Uriah in the thick of danger and leave him to perish. In a little while came a runner to the king with news of an attack on the city; some of the king's men had fallen, he said; "and thy servant, Uriah the Hittite is dead also." David answered with cheering words, "Be not discouraged; this is the chance of the sword; attack in force and overthrow Rabbah."

Bath-sheba mourned for her husband, and when the seven days were passed, David fetched her to his house,

and she became his wife. But this was an evil thing in God's eyes, and the Lord sent Nathan to David.

Nathan said to the king, “ There are two men in one city, one rich and the other poor. The rich man has flocks and herds very many; the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished. It grew up in his house, together with his children. It ate of his morsel, it drank of his cup, and lay in his bosom; and it was to him as a daughter. A wayfarer came to the rich man's, and the rich man refrained from taking of his own flock and his own herd to set before the wayfarer; he took the poor man's ewe lamb, and prepared it for the wayfarer who came to him.”

David was hot with anger. “ God's life ! ” he said, “ the man who did this—death is his doom ! And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this, and because he had no pity.” “ Thou art the man,” said Nathan; “ and this is God's message to thee, ‘ Why hast thou despised the word of the Lord, and done evil in His sight? Now, because thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and taken his wife to be thy wife, the sword shall never be far from thy house.’ ”

David said, “ I have sinned against the Lord.” “ Thy sin the Lord has forgiven,” Nathan said; “ thou shalt not die. But because thou hast given His enemies great occasion to revile, the child that is born to thee shall die.”

The Lord struck the child of Bath-sheba, and it was very sick. David besought the Lord therefore for the child, and fasted; and when he went in, he lay all night on the ground. The princes of his house sought to raise him up, but he would not, neither did he break bread with them. On the seventh day the child died. And they dreaded to tell him that the child was dead. But when David saw that they were whispering, he knew that the child was dead. David said to them, “ Is the child dead ? ” “ He is dead,” they answered.

Then David rose from the ground, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his raiment; and he went into the house of the Lord and worshipped. He returned to his own house; and he asked them to set food before him, and he ate. And they all looked at him with wonderment; but David said, "While the child was still alive I fasted and I wept; for I said, 'Who can tell whether God will not take pity on me that the child may live?' And now he is dead;—wherefore should I weep? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me."

And David comforted Bath-sheba; and when another child was born, his name was called Solomon; and God loved Solomon.

65. THE REBELLION OF ABSALOM.

It was not long before the curse of the sword fell upon the house of David. At a feast of the king's sons Absalom slew his eldest brother Amnon, and fled to his grandfather Talmai, king of Geshur, beyond the Waters of Merom. The heart of David longed for his son in exile, and after three years Absalom was recalled to Jerusalem, but many a day passed before the king received him and forgave him.

There was none in all Israel so much praised as Absalom for his beauty; his hair fell in heavy splendour below his shoulders; and from head to heel there was no blemish in him. When he had made his peace with his father, he got him chariots and horses, and fifty retainers to run before him. In the early morning he stood beside the city gate and greeted tribesmen who came from a distance—made court to suitors, regretted the law's delay, the preoccupation of the king. "Would that I were made a judge in this land!" he would say; "Every man who had suit or cause might come to me, and I should do him justice." When one would have bowed down to do him homage, Absalom would pre-

vent him and greet him with a kiss. So he beguiled the hearts of the men of Israel.

At length, when his plots had been laid and his spies had done their work among the tribes of Israel, he went with his father's leave to the sanctuary of Hebron to fulfil a vow, and suddenly proclaimed himself king at sound of trumpet. Word was quickly brought to David, "The hearts of the children of Israel have turned to Absalom." "Let us flee," said David, "lest he come up against this holy city and smite it with the edge of the sword." He hurried from Jerusalem with all his household, except ten ladies left to keep the royal house. His people passed out in arms beside him—Abishai, Benaiah (slayer of the lion of the snow) at the head of all his Cherethites and Pelethites, and all the Gittite guard, six hundred men, who came up with him from Gath.

At the brook Kedron, said David to Ittai, the captain of the Gittite guard, "Why art thou too coming with us? Return to Jerusalem, and abide with—the king. Thou art a sojourner, an exile too. It was but yesterday thou didst come—shall I ask thee to go with us to-day, and I not knowing whither I shall go? Turn back, thou and all thy brethren; and goodness and truth go with thee!" "By God's life, and the king's life," replied Ittai, "in what place soever the king my lord shall be, to live or to die, there shall I thy servant be." "Pass!" said David. And Ittai passed over Kedron, with all his six hundred, and all the little children that were with him.

Then David bade the priests Zadok and Abiathar carry back the ark of God into the city. "If it please God," he said, "He will bring me back again, and show me both it and His dwelling-place; but if He hath no pleasure in me—let Him do with me what seems good in His eyes." Thereto he said, "Return in peace with your two sons. Do you not see? I shall linger on the edge of the wilderness till they bring me news from you." So they carried back the ark into the city.

All the country wept and wailed as the people passed over Kedron. The king also passed over the brook, with bare feet and head covered for sorrow, and went weeping up the ascent to Olivet.

They told him that Ahithophel, the chief of his counsellors, was among the conspirators with Absalom. David said, "O Lord, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness." At the high-place on Olivet came to him Hushai the Archite with robe rent and earth upon his head. "If thou wouldst befriend me," said David, "remain and make thy suit to the new king. Thou mayst then defeat for me the subtlety of Ahithophel. And what thou hearest in the palace tell Zadok and Abiathar."

Then at Bahurim David turned towards the wilderness, and on another ridge of the mountain came out Shimei of the household of Saul, and cursed him, "Get thee gone, thou man of blood and wickedness; the Lord is this day avenging on thee the blood of the house of Saul." Said Abishai grimly, "Why should this dead dog curse the king? Let me go across and take off his head." "Let him curse," said David; "the Lord has bidden him. The son of my bones and of my flesh is seeking my life, why should not this Benjamite? It may be God will bless me for his cursing." He went on, and Shimei went along the hill-side opposite, and cursed him, and flung stones, and cast up the dust against him.

That day Absalom and his rebels entered Jerusalem. Ahithophel said, "Let me take twelve thousand men, and I will pursue David this night, before he gathers strength. The king alone will I slay, and bring thee back all his people." Absalom and the princes liked his counsel but Absalom bade Hushai speak. Hushai said, "Do you think to take David sleeping? Do you forget the mighty valour of his men? You were better to face the bear robbed of her whelps than face their last stand. If folk fall before them, there will be a

cry, 'Absalom's men have been slaughtered.' Wait till all Israel is in arms with thee. Were David then in a fenced city, they could put ropes about it and hale it down."

Hushai's counsel prevailed. Word was sent to David and he crossed over Jordan. Ahithophel saw that already the cause of the usurper was doomed, rode away to his house, put all in order, and hanged himself.

The king came to Mahanaim, and Barzillai the Gileadite and other princes supplied him and his people with all they needed. Meanwhile the war-horns sounded through Israel, and Absalom crossed over Jordan with a host which lay thick as dew when it camped in Gilead. And the day of battle came. From Mahanaim David sent a third of his power under Joab, a third under Abishai, and a third under Ittai the Gittite; but the people would not suffer the king to march with them: "Thou art worth ten thousand of us; better thou shouldst bring us help from the city, if we should need it." "Be it so," said David; and he charged Joab and Abishai and the staunch Gittite, "Deal gently for my sake with young Absalom."

The battle was in the forest that drops down to Jordan; and that day the forest, with its gullies and swamps and precipices, devoured more than the sword. By the sword fell twenty thousand men.

Absalom encountered the veterans of the king. The royal mule on which he rode ran under the thick boughs of a great terebinth. His long hair caught in the branches, the mule passed from under him, and he was held up between heaven and earth. A man who saw it told Joab. "And why didst thou not kill him?" said Joab, "I would have given thee ten shekels of silver and a belt of valour." "Not for a thousand would I lay hand on the king's son. We heard the king tell thee, and Abishai, and Ittai, 'Beware how you touch the young Absalom.'" "I waste time with thee," said Joab. Taking three javelins in his hand,

he went and plunged them into the heart of Absalom, still full of life, in the thick of the tree; and ten young men who bore his weapons surrounded Absalom, and slew him.

Israel fled in wild confusion. With long blasts of his war-horn Joab called his host from the pursuit. They took Absalom, cast him into a deep hollow in the forest, and piled a huge cairn of stones over him.

As David sat in the gate of Mahanaim runners brought him news of the fight. "Good tidings, my lord the king!" said Cushie. "Jehovah has delivered thee this day from the hand of those who revolted against thee." David said, "Is it well with the young man—with Absalom?" "As that young man is," said Cushie, "so may the enemies of the king be, and all that rise against him!"

The king was much moved. He went up to the chamber over the gate; and as he went, he cried, "My son Absalom! My son; my son Absalom! Would that I had died for thee! Absalom! my son, my son!" Victory that day was turned into mourning for all the people. The veterans stole into the city, silent and ashamed, like beaten men.

Joab went in wrathfully to the king, who was weeping with covered face. "Thou hast covered with shame," he said, "the faces of all thy servants; who have this day saved thy life, and the lives of all thy household. We see now that princes and servants are nothing to thee. If Absalom were alive, and all we dead this day, it would please thee well. Arise therefore, and go forth, and speak to the hearts of thy servants. By the Lord God, if thou dost not, not a man will remain till nightfall—and that will be the worst thing that ever befell thee from thy youth to this day."

David arose; news flew through the streets, "The king is sitting in the gate"; and all the people crowded to him.



Saul and David.

Once more the hearts of the tribes turned to David. The princes marched down to Gilgal to bring him back to his holy city.

Barzillai the princely came down from Gilead with the king to see him over Jordan. He was a very aged man. David would have had him dwell with him in Jerusalem, but Barzillai said, "How many are yet to be the days of my years that I should go up to Jerusalem with the king? I am now four score years old. Can I still tell what is good from what is bad? Can I taste what I eat, or what I drink? Can I still hear the voices of singing-men and singing-women? Then why should thy servant be any longer a burden to my lord the king? Thy servant goes a little way, beyond Jordan, with the king—but what is that that the king should so reward him? Let thy servant turn back, that I may die in my own city and be buried near the sepulchre of my father and my mother. But here is thy servant Chimham, my son—do with him what shall seem good to thee." "I will do what shall seem good to thee," David answered. Then they and all the people passed over Jordan; the king kissed Barzillai and blessed him, and the old sheik returned to Gilead.

Shimei came down also to the crossing of Jordan, fell at David's feet, and craved for pardon. Abishai broke in with a tongue of fire, "Shall not Shimei lose his head for cursing the king?" "Peace, son of Zeruah," said David. "Shall any man be put to death this day in Israel? Nay, by my life"; and to Shimei he said, "Thou shalt not die."

66. ARAUNAH'S THRESHING-FLOOR.

FOR three years together there was famine in the land, and it was a judgment, for Saul had broken the covenant made with the crafty men of Gibeon in the days of Joshua, and had slain the Gibeonites. David offered to make atonement, but the men of Gibeon said, "We will take neither silver nor gold; nor shalt

thou kill any man for us in Israel; but give into our hands seven of the sons of the man that destroyed us, Saul that was king. David would not give up Merib-baal, the son of Jonathan, but he delivered to them the two sons of Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah, and the five sons of Merab, the daughter of Saul.

The men of Gibeon took them and hanged them up unto the Lord on the hill of Saul, all seven together. It was in the first April days of the barley harvest. Rizpah took the sackcloth of sorrow and spread it beneath her on the rock; and all through the burning months she suffered neither the birds of the air to rest upon them by day, nor the wild beasts to approach them at night, until at last the seven were drenched with the October rains, which broke the drought.

David was told what Rizpah had done. He had the bones of Saul and of Jonathan brought from Jabesh in Gilead and laid in the sepulchre of Kish, Saul's father; and the bones of the seven upon the hill were laid there with them.

In an unhappy hour David made a numbering of the tribes of Israel. From Aroer to Dan, and from Dan to Beer-sheba, he counted what Jehovah had promised should be countless, even as the stars in the heavens. Gad the seer came to David and said, "Thou hast sinned against the Lord; choose now which thou wilt suffer—three years of famine in the land, or three months fleeing from thy enemies, or else three days of pestilence." David said, "Let us fall into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies are very great; but let me not fall into the hand of man."

So Jehovah sent His pestilence, and from Dan to Beer-sheba seventy thousand men were dead. David looked up and saw the angel of the pestilence standing between heaven and earth at the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite; and in the angel's hand was a drawn sword stretched out over Jerusalem.

David said to the Lord, "I have done wickedly;

but these my sheep—what have they done that Thou shouldst slay them? Turn Thy hand, I pray Thee, only against me and my father's house." The heart of the Lord was rueful towards Jerusalem, and He said to the angel, "Sheathe thy sword; it is enough."

David went up that day to buy the threshing-floor of Araunah, so that he might build an altar upon it and sacrifice to the Lord. But, as a king gives to a king, Araunah besought him to accept the threshing-floor, and to take for a burnt-offering the oxen treading out the wheat, and all the wood of the threshing gear as fuel for the altar; "And may the Lord thy God accept thee!" "Nay," David answered, "but grant me the place at its full price. I cannot offer God burnt-offerings which cost me nothing." So the king weighed out for Araunah six hundred shekels of gold. He reared a great altar of rude stones. When his offering had been laid upon it, he called upon the Lord, and fire fell from heaven and consumed his sacrifice.

Now the tent which Moses made in the wilderness and the altar of holocausts were at this time on the high-place of Gibeon, but at the sight of these marvels on the threshing-floor, David cried aloud, "Here shall my son build the house of the Lord and the altar of burnt-offerings for Israel." Straightway he gathered together the strangers in the land, and set to work the hewers of wrought stones and all manner of cunning craftsmen; prepared gold and silver, bronze and iron, great cedar trees, and marble and precious stones of many colours; and made plans of its courts and chambers and treasuries, as he saw them in his spirit; for, said he, "the house that is to be built for the Lord God must be exceedingly magnificent, a fame and a glory throughout all countries."

The princes of the tribes, too, and the captains gave willingly; and the king blessed God for it, "though it be but of Thine own that we have given Thee. For we are sojourners, as were all our fathers, and our days

on the earth are a shadow, and this store we prepare for a house to Thy holy name cometh from Thy hand."

When David was old and near the end of days, he sent for Zadok the priest and Nathan the seer and his mighty men, and bade them anoint Solomon king, "for I have chosen him to be ruler over Israel and over Judah." "Amen!" said Benaiah, "the Lord God of my lord the king say so too!" The young prince, still in his teens, rode forth on the king's mule, and the Cherethites and Pelethites and Ittai and his guards marched down with him to Gihon spring. Zadok anointed him with oil from the tabernacle of the Lord, and the silver trumpets were sounded. All the people cried, "God save king Solomon!" and they came up with him into the city, piping and dancing and singing so that the hills rang, and the conspirators who thought to crown his brother Adonijah fled in dismay.

When the time drew near that David must die, he said to Solomon his son, "I am going the way of all the earth. Wherefore be strong and show thyself a man. Keep the commandments of Jehovah thy God and walk in His ways; so shalt thou prosper in all thou dost and whithersoever thou turnest."

David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David on Mount Zion. Forty years and more had he reigned over Israel.

67. THE HOUSE MAGNIFICAL.

So in his youth Solomon sat on the throne of his father. He went up to the high-place of Gibeon and sacrificed a thousand burnt-offerings to Jehovah; and in a dream of the night the Lord appeared to him and said, "Ask what thou wouldst have me give thee."

Solomon said, "O Jehovah, my God, Thou hast made Thy servant king instead of David my father; and I am but a child. Thou hast set me in the midst of Thy

chosen people who are too many to be numbered. Give therefore Thy servant an understanding heart to judge Thy people, to discern good from evil."

The Lord said, "Since thou hast asked for this and not for long life, neither for riches, nor the death of thy enemies, see, I give thee a wise and understanding heart, such as none have had before thee, and after thee none shall ever have. And thereto I give thee what thou hast not asked, riches and glory beyond every king in all thy days."

Solomon awoke, and it was a dream. He returned to Jerusalem, and worshipped before the ark of the Lord.

Then there came two women to the king, and one of them said, "O my lord, we were two women dwelling in one house, each with a little babe, and no one with us else in the house. And this woman's babe died in the night; and she rose while thy servant was sleeping and took my son from my side, and laid her dead child in my bosom. When I arose in the morning to suckle it, see, it was dead; but as I looked at it closely I knew that it was not my son." The other woman said, "No, the living babe is my son, and the dead is thine." And the first woman answered, "No, but the dead is thy son, and the living is mine."

The young king said, "Bring me a sword." They brought the king a sword, and he said, "Cut the living child in two; give half to one, and half to the other." Then the mother of the living child said, "Oh no, my lord; give her the child alive, and do not kill it." But the other woman said, "It shall be neither mine nor thine; cut it in two." Then the king said, "Give the first woman the living child, and do not hurt it at all. She is its mother."

All Israel heard of the king's judgment, and they feared Solomon, for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to do justice.

On the second day of Zif, the month of April blossom, in the fourth year of his reign Solomon began to build

the house of the Lord on the great threshing-floor over which David saw the angel. It was the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel came out of Egypt.

All the stone and the marble and the trees of Lebanon, floated along the coast from Tyre to Joppa, had been wrought and made ready, so that there was no sound of hammer or of axe heard while the house was building. Like the tent in the wilderness the house contained a holy place and a holy of holies; and within it no stone was seen, for all the stone-work was panelled with cedar carved with cherubim and palm-trees and buds opening into flowers, and these were covered with plates of gold and set with precious stones. It was floored with juniper, and ceiled with juniper and cedar, and the ceilings were plated and the floors overlaid with gold.

In the holy of holies stood two great cherubs, looking outward to the holy place. Their height was ten cubits, and the spread of their outstretched wings twenty cubits, for the inner wings of the cherubs touched each other and the tips of their outer wings touched the golden walls. The doors of the holy of holies were of wild olive-tree wrought into cherubs and flowers and palms covered with beaten gold; and before these doors hung a pictured curtain of blue and purple and white and crimson like the curtain of the tent of the Lord in the wilderness.

The porch of the house was of the like noble workmanship and beauty. In front of the porch the king reared two massive pillars, five and thirty cubits high, crowned with cornices of embossed lilies and wreathed with festoons of pomegranates. The pillar on the right was called Jachin, and that on the left Boaz, and these are Steadfastness and Might. Beyond them was the great court closed in with a triple colonnade of wrought stone, roofed with cedar; and in the court stood the great round tank of water, the "sea" it was called—ten cubits across, cast in bronze, and fashioned around the

brim, like the brim of a cup, with lily-flowers. It rested on the backs of twelve oxen of bronze, and these faced in threes each of the four winds. Trees too shadowed and refreshed the open sunny spaces—the silver-grey olive, the dark ledges of the cedar, and the palm.

Thus Solomon built the house magnificent, wrought of gold its altar of incense, its table of unfailing bread, its lamp-stands and all its furniture, and placed in its treasuries the vessels of silver and gold and the spoils of nations dedicated aforetime by his father David. In seven and a half years, in Bul, the month of the October rains and of sowers sowing, he finished it throughout.

After harvest home in the year following the king made a seven-days' feast for all the people, and all the princes of Israel and the elders and the heads of families gathered in Jerusalem. The ancient tent of the Lord and all the sacred things of the sanctuary were brought from Gibeon and laid up in the store-houses of the temple, and the serpent of bronze was erected with an altar of incense before it.

Then the ark of the covenant was lifted up and borne by the Levites out of the tent in Zion. It contained nothing but the two stone tablets which Moses had put into it in Horeb; the vase of manna and Aaron's flowering rod and his golden censer had been lost. They bore the ark into the holy of holies. They laid it down under the wide-spread wings of the great cherubim, and drew out the acacia staves from the rings of gold, for this was the place of its rest for ever.

As the priests came out of the holy place, all the singing-men, clothed in white linen and with cymbals and harps and lutes in their hands, and the great company of priests with trumpets joined in one mighty sound of praise and thanksgiving—

“O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good—
For His pity endureth for ever”;

and the cloud of God filled all the holy house with such splendour that the priests could not stand and minister before it.

Then from a scaffold of bronze in the great court Solomon rose and blessed all the gathering of Israel; and drawing near the vast altar of burnt-offerings he knelt, with hands outstretched towards heaven, and prayed, "Lord God of Israel, there is no God like Thee in heaven above or on earth beneath; Thou keepest covenant, and showest compassion towards Thy servants who walk before Thee with all their heart. So hast Thou kept Thy word with David my father, and what Thou didst promise with Thy mouth Thou hast this day fulfilled by Thy power. But will God in very deed dwell with man on the earth? Lo, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; how much less this house which I have built! Yet, O Jehovah, my God, give ear to the supplication of Thy servant—that Thine eyes be open upon this house day and night; hearken to the prayer of Thy servant, and of Thy people Israel, when they beseech Thee in this place; hear Thou in heaven Thy dwelling-place, and when Thou hearest, forgive." For the stranger from a distant land he asked the same grace; and for men gone forth to battle and for children of Israel captive among an alien people, he begged the Lord to hear them if they prayed with but hearts and faces turned towards the temple.

When Solomon had brought his prayer to an end fire came down from heaven and consumed the holocaust on the great altar; and at the sight of the fire falling and of the glory of Jehovah filling His house, all the people fell to the earth on their faces and praised God, saying, "For He is good; for His pity endureth for ever."

68. SOLOMON, HIS WISDOM AND GLORY.

IN the days of king Solomon the people of Israel and Judah were like the sand of the sea for multitude.

Every man dwelt secure under his fig-tree and the vine that was trained among its branches; and they ate and drank and made merry. Corn abounded in the land even to the tops of the hills, and the harvest shook and rustled like the leaves on Lebanon. In Jerusalem silver was as common as stones, and cedar as plentiful as the sycamore of the western foot-hills.

Solomon reigned over all the kingdoms from Tiphseh, the Ford of Euphrates, to Gaza on the hill; they paid him tribute. And the isles of the Great Sea and the princes of Tarshish on the uttermost shores of the west sent him their presents. He laid the highways of the merchants with black basalt; Tadmor he built in the oasis far beyond the rose-red city of Damascus; from his ship-yards at Ezion-geber his deep-sea galleons went faring to Ophir for gold and sandal-wood, silver and ivory, apes and peacocks.

Fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horsemen were stationed in his chief cities. He rode abroad crowned and in snow-white robes, with an escort of mounted bowmen in purple of Tyre. His palace was hung about with five hundred gold shields of his mighty men and five hundred shields of the vanquished heroes of Hadadezer; its lofty columns of cedar gave it the name of "the house of the forest of Lebanon." Hard by it was the cedar-roofed portico of pillared stone where he sat in judgment; and his seat was a throne of ivory overlaid with gold, and the arms of the throne were supported by lions, and twelve lions stood on the six steps to the throne, on one side and on the other.

God gave Solomon largeness of heart and exceeding wisdom; he was wise beyond the vision of the East and all the lore of Egypt. He uttered three thousand proverbs, and composed a thousand songs and five. He wrote of all manner of green things growing, from the red-armed cedar-tree to the marjoram that springs out of the chinks of the wall; and of beasts, of winged creatures, of creeping things and of fishes.

The fame of king Solomon was noised through all

the nations around; and when the queen of Sheba heard of his wisdom, she came to Jerusalem with a great train, and with dromedaries laden with spices, gold, and precious stones. She talked with Solomon of all that was in her heart, and she put no subtle question to him which he did not answer. She saw the House of the Forest, and the service of his table, the dwellings of his servants, the attendance and apparel of his ministers and his cup-bearers, and the wonderful bridge by which he went up from Mount Zion to the temple, and carried away with pleasure, she exclaimed, "All that I heard was true, but the half was not told me. Blessed be Jehovah thy God whose graciousness made thee king. It is surely because Jehovah loves Israel for ever, that He has made thee king to do justice and right." She gave Solomon a hundred and twenty talents of gold, and such abundance of spices as was never again brought to Jerusalem; and the king gave her all her desire, and more yet, of his kingly graciousness.

69. THE RENT MANTLE.

BUT these glorious buildings, and all the pomp and luxury of Solomon's life were dearly purchased. Foreign tribute and the burdens laid upon the strangers in the land did not suffice for his splendid extravagance. The free people of Israel were oppressed with cruel taxation, and their strength and their pride were brought low by forced labour under the rods of the taskmaster. Their lot was made the more grievous by their falling away from the God of their fathers, who alone could deliver them; and in this, too, the king was to blame.

For Solomon loved many foreign women, and as he grew old his wives led him astray after the gods of the heathen. Jehovah had his whole heart no longer. He worshipped Astarté, the evil goddess of Zidon, and Milcom, the ox-headed abomination of Ammon, on whose brazen hands little children were burnt alive; and for Milcom and Chemosh he built sanctuaries on

the Mount of Olives, in sight of the temple of Jehovah. Twice he was warned in visions of the night; the third time the Lord said to him, "Thou hast broken my covenant and disobeyed my laws. I will rend thy kingdom from thee and give it to thy servant. Yet for David's sake, this shall not be in thy days, but I will rend it from thy son. Nor yet shall it be all the kingdom; one tribe I will leave him that David thy father may have a lamp always before me in Jerusalem."

Now Jeroboam, son of Nebat, was the king's minister over the forced labour imposed upon his kinsmen, the tribe of Ephraim; and as he went upon his way at this time from Jerusalem to Ephraim, he met Ahijah the prophet of Shiloh. And these two were alone upon the moorland track. Jeroboam was wearing a new mantle, and the prophet caught it from him, rent it into twelve pieces, and gave him ten. "Thus," said Ahijah, "the Lord will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and his son. And He will take thee and make thee king over Israel. He will be with thee if thou wilt walk in His ways, and He will afflict the children of David, but not for ever."

Jeroboam was bold and valiant, and he began to work for the deliverance of his kinsmen, for he had seen their sufferings; but his plots were discovered, and he fled from Solomon and took refuge in Egypt. Thenceforth the shadows deepened over the king in his unhallowed splendour. After he had reigned forty years over all Israel, he slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David.

Rehoboam his son went to Shechem,* that place of old time between Gerizim and Ebal, the mountains, for there the tribes of all Israel were gathered to crown him king. Then Jeroboam, who had come up out of Egypt, spoke to the son of Solomon in the face of all the people, "Thy father made our yoke grievous; do thou lighten it, and we will serve thee." Rehoboam bade them come for his answer in three days, and took

* The Sichem of Abram.

counsel. The grey-haired captains and ministers of Solomon said, "If thou speak graciously to the people, they will be thy servants for ever"; but the young men who had been brought up with Rehoboam gave the advice of fools. So on the third day he answered the people harshly, "My father made your yoke heavy; I will make it heavier. My father chastised you with whips; I will chastise you with scorpions."

When the people heard his words they cried out, "What share have we with David? We have no heritage with the son of Jesse. To your tents, Israel!" (for in these northern parts they still lived chiefly in tents). "Henceforth, David, see to your own house!" So the kingdom was rent in twain. Adoram, the tribute-officer, was stoned to death; and Rehoboam fled with his chariots to Jerusalem, and was king over Judah and Benjamin; and Jeroboam was king over the ten tribes of Israel.

But Jeroboam was afraid that if his people went up to the great feasts at the temple, they might return to their allegiance and slay him, so he set up golden calves, one at Beth-el and one at Dan, and proclaimed among the tribes, "Long enough have you gone up to Jerusalem. See, Israel, here is your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt!" He built sanctuaries for them on the high-places, appointed a new harvest feast, and made priests from among the common people.

Now as Jeroboam was offering incense at the altar of the golden calf at Beth-el, there came a man of God from Judah, and he cried out against the altar, "O altar, altar! a child shall be born to the house of David who shall offer upon thee the priests that burn incense upon thee, and upon thee shall the bones of men be burnt." King Jeroboam stretched out his arm above the altar and said, "Lay hold of him!" but the king's arm was dried up so that he could not draw it back. At Jeroboam's entreaty the holy man besought the Lord, and the king's arm was restored. Then they saw

that the altar was rent asunder and that the ashes were poured out on the ground.

The man of God departed, and as he sat by the wayside under an oak, there came riding on an ass an old prophet of Beth-el, who said to him, "Art thou the man of God from Judah?" "I am," he said. "Come then home with me and eat bread." "That may not be," said the man of God, "for it was said to me, 'Eat no bread, drink no water, return not by the way thou camest.'" "I, too, like thee, am a prophet," said the man of Beth-el, "and an angel from the Lord said to me, 'Bring him back into thy house that he may eat bread and drink water.'" He was lying to him. So the man of God returned with him and ate and drank. While they were at table the word of the Lord came to the old prophet, and he cried to the man from Judah, "Seeing thou hast disobeyed the command of Jehovah and hast eaten and drunk, thy corpse shall not lie in the sepulchre of thy fathers." Then the old prophet saddled the ass for him and the man of God departed. A lion met him by the way and slew him. The ass remained near, and the lion stood beside the body. Those who passed by saw it, and told the story. The old prophet said "It is the man of God, who disobeyed the word of the Lord"; and he rode out, and took the body from the lion and brought it back on the ass, and laid it in his own tomb. They wept for the dead man, saying, "Alas, my brother!" The old prophet said to his sons, "When I am dead, lay my bones in the sepulchre beside the bones of the man of God, for the word that he cried out will come to pass against the altar of Beth-el and the sanctuaries on the high-places in Samaria."

70. ELIJAH THE PROPHET.

IN Judah as in Israel the Lord was provoked to anger, for they built idol shrines, and set up statues, and tokens of Astarté on every high hill and under every

green tree that the wayfarer sought for shade. In the fifth year of king Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem with chariots and horsemen and a great host, pillaged the temple of the Lord and the House of the Forest, and carried off the gold shields of Solomon.

Rehoboam reigned seventeen years, and died; his son Abijam reigned three years and died; but Asa son of Abijam destroyed the altars of strange gods, broke the statues, and cut down the tokens of Astarté. He reigned one and forty years, died, and was buried, wrapped in fragrant spices; and Jehoshaphat his son was king after him.

But all went from bad to worse in the kingdom of Israel. Jeroboam reigned two and twenty years, and died. Nadab his son, in the second year of his reign, was murdered by Baasha, one of his captains. Baasha went the way of Jeroboam and was doomed by the Lord. Elah his son became king, but was murdered by Zimri, commander of half of his chariots. Zimri reigned seven days, was beleaguered in Tirzah, and closed his last revels by firing the palace and perishing in the flames. Omri was made king, and built the fair city of Samaria which looked out over rounded hills and wooded valleys to the Great Sea; but he wrought more evil in the eyes of the Lord than all that went before him. He too died, and Ahab his son was king of Israel in his stead. This was in the last days of Asa the king of Judah.

Ahab was still more impious than his father Omri. He married the Zidonian princess Jezebel, daughter of king Ethbaal. In Samaria he built to Baal a splendid temple, and an altar which smoked with sacrifices before the shining image of the god riding on the sun-bull with grapes and pomegranates in his hands; and he set up the symbols of Astarté and coloured tents for her evil worship. It was in this bad time that Hiel the Beth-elite rebuilt the walls of Jericho, and drew down the ancient curse, for his first-born son perished as he

laid the foundations, and his youngest as he hung its gates.

Suddenly appeared before Ahab the king Elijah of Tishbeh, a wild shaggy-haired man with a prophet's girdle, out of the mountain forests of Gilead. He said to Ahab, "As Jehovah liveth, the God of Israel whose servant I am, no rain shall there be, no dew, in these years except at my bidding." Then as the Lord had commanded him he fled away eastward beyond Jordan, and hid himself among the rocks by the brook Cherith; and morning and evening the ravens brought him bread and flesh, and he drank of the water of the brook.

And the great drought began. Ahab searched through the land for Elijah, sought for him in the neighbouring kingdoms, required an oath from kings and people that he was not to be found. Jezebel in her fury slew the prophets of God, but Obadiah the king's steward, who loved and worshipped the Lord, hid a hundred of them in caves and fed them there. The brook Cherith ran dry for there was no rain; and there was famine in Samaria.

The Lord said to Elijah, "Get thee away to Zarephath; I have commanded there a widow to provide for thee." As he came to the gate of the city on the sea-shore of the Zidonians, he saw a woman gathering sticks, and he said to her, "Bring me, I pray thee, a little water to drink," and as she turned to fetch it, he added, "Also a morsel of bread." The woman answered, "As the Lord thy God liveth, there is but a handful of meal left in the jar and a little oil in the cruse; and I was gathering sticks that my son and I might eat our last bread and die." "No fear," said Elijah; "kindle thy fire; but make me first a little cake, and then make for thyself and thy son, for this is the word of the Lord, 'The oil in thy cruse shall not dwindle nor the meal in thy jar fail before the rain comes.'" The woman did as Elijah told her, and for many days the meal and the oil sufficed for them all.

In the third year of the drought the Lord said to Elijah, "Go, show thyself to Ahab, and I will send rain." Now Ahab had gone forth one way, and his steward Obadiah another, to see whether by the brook-sides and the springs they might find grass to keep the king's horses and mules alive; and Elijah met Obadiah. The steward bowed down to him and said, "Is it thou, my lord Elijah?" "It is I," he answered; "go, tell thy master that Elijah is here." But Obadiah said, "Wherein have I offended that thou seekest my life? There is no nation wherein the king has not sought for thee; if now I go to tell him thou art here, and the spirit of the Lord carries thee whither I know not, and the king does not find thee, he will slay me." "By the life of the Lord whose servant I am," said Elijah, "I will stand this day before Ahab."

So Obadiah went, and the king came to Elijah; and scarce had he seen him before he said, "Art thou he, the troubler of Israel?" "I have not troubled Israel," said Elijah, "but thou, and thy father's house; ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast worshipped Baal. Assemble for me now all Israel on Mount Carmel, and with them the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Astarté who eat from thy queen's table."

When all were come together Elijah said to the people, "How long will you flutter between two branches? If Jehovah is God, follow Him; but if it be Baal, then follow him. I alone am left of the prophets of Jehovah; but the prophets of Baal are four hundred and fifty"; and turning to them, he said, "Let us slay two bullocks, and put wood on the altar, and the flesh upon the wood. You shall call on your gods, and I will call upon the name of Jehovah; and the God that answers by fire, He shall be God." All the people answered, "It is well said."

They went up into Carmel. Westward they saw the Great Sea blazing in the dry heat, eastward the new palace of the king and the glittering temples of Jezreel. From the brushwood and the dwarf oaks and olives of

the mountain they cut fuel and made ready the sacrifice. From morning till noontide they called upon their god, "O Baal, answer us!" But there was no voice, and none replied.

Elijah mocked them. "Cry with a mighty cry," he said, "since he is a god. He is pondering on something; or he is busy; or he is wayfaring. Perchance he is slumbering, and will awake." They cried aloud; they gashed themselves, after their manner, with swords and spears till the blood streamed over them. It drew towards evening, and there was no voice, and no god heeding.

Then Elijah built up again the ancient altar of the Lord with twelve stones for the twelve tribes of Israel. Thrice he drenched with water the burnt-offering, the wood, and the altar until the trench he had dug round it was filled. At the hour of the evening offering he stood forth and said, "Jehovah, God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, answer me; answer me so that this people may know that Thou, Lord, art God, and that it is Thou who hast turned back their hearts." Then fell from heaven the fire of the Lord, and it consumed the burnt-offering and the wood and the stones and the earth, and drank up the water of the trench.

All the people saw it and fell upon their faces, crying, "Jehovah is God, Jehovah is God!" "Seize the prophets of Baal," said Elijah; "let not one of them escape." The people seized them; they took them down to the brook Kishon, and there Elijah slew them.

As the king turned away from the blood-stained shingle of the stream, Elijah said to him, "Go up to the feast, and eat and drink." Ahab went up to the place of sacrifice, but Elijah ascended towards the summit of Carmel, and leaning down to the earth he sat with his face between his knees, praying for rain.

He said to his servant, "Go up to the top, and look out over the sea." The servant stood on the highest ridge, looked to the cloudless sky, to the sea spread wide

in the clear light, and returned to Elijah. "Nothing!" he said. Seven times Elijah bade him go back again. At the seventh time the servant said, "A little cloud, like the palm of a man's hand, comes up out of the sea." "Get thee to the king," said Elijah, "and tell him, 'Put in the horses, and hasten lest the rain stop thee.'"

Suddenly the heavens were black with clouds and wind and blinding rain. Ahab leaped into his chariot and sped to Jezreel. The hand of the Lord was laid on Elijah. He girded his loins, and ran before the king until they came to the entrance of the city. Ahab told the queen all that had happened. At the story of the massacre of the prophets, whose bodies were now whirling down to the sea, Jezebel rose in flaming anger and sent a message to Elijah, "The gods waste me if I have not made thy head like one of theirs by this time to-morrow!"

Through the darkness and the sounding rain Elijah fled with his servant. Day and night they hurried over the high moors till they came to Beer-sheba. Thence Elijah went on alone a day's journey into the white and burning desert. Sick and hopeless he cast himself down in the shade of a bush of broom, and said, "Enough, O Lord; now take away my soul; I am no better than my fathers." He lay and slept under the bush of broom. Then an angel touched him and said, "Awake, and eat." At his head lay a cake baked on the hot stones and a pitcher of water. He ate and drank and slept again. A second time the angel woke him and said, "Arise and eat once more, or the way will be too long for thee." Elijah rose and ate and drank; and in the strength of that food he journeyed forty days and forty nights, and came to the wadys of brightly coloured cliff and to Sinai the mountain of God.

The word of the Lord spoke to Elijah sitting in a cave, "What dost thou here, Elijah?" Elijah answered, "I have been very zealous for Jehovah, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, Thine altars they have overturned, they have

slain Thy prophets with the sword. I am left, I by myself, and they seek to take my life." The Lord said, "Go forth, and stand upon the mountain before Jehovah."

Then Jehovah passed by.

Before Him went wind, great and strong, rending the mountains and shivering the rocks. But Jehovah was not in the wind. After the wind went earthquake. But Jehovah was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake ran the terrible fire of lightning. But Jehovah was not in the fire. After the fire there was a voice, gentle and low, a sound of soft stillness. When Elijah heard it, he covered his face with his mantle, and going forth, he stood waiting in the entrance of the cave.

Then a voice spoke to him, "What dost thou here, Elijah?" He answered as before, and the Lord said to him, "Go, take thy way again through the desert to Damascus. Thou shalt anoint Hazael to be king over Syria, and Jehu the son of Nimshi to be king over Israel, and Elisha the son of Shaphat to be prophet in thy place after thee. I have yet in Israel seven thousand left me, knees that have not bent to Baal, mouths that have not kissed him."

In the Meadow of the Dance near Beth-shan Elijah came upon Elisha ploughing, and his team was the last of twelve yoke of oxen; and Elijah, as he passed by, threw his mantle upon him. Elisha left his oxen and ran after the prophet. "Let me," he said, "but give my father and my mother a kiss, and I will follow thee." Then Elisha sacrificed his team, and spread a feast for the people, and went forth with Elijah and served him.

71. THE CHARIOT OF FIRE.

NABOTH the Jezreelite had a vineyard in Jezreel. It was in the valley opening to the morning, and hard by the palace of the king. Ahab said to Naboth, "Let

me have thy vineyard for a garden of sweet herbs, for it is very near my house. I will give thee a better vineyard in its stead, or, if it please thee more, silver to the value of it." "Nay," said Naboth, "God forbid that I should give thee the heritage of my fathers."

Ahab returned home wrathful and sullen, lay down on his couch with his face to the wall, and refused to eat. The queen came to him and questioned him, and he told her the cause of his vexation. "And thou art king of Israel!" she laughed. "Up, and feast and bear thyself merrily, for I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth."

She sent letters from Samaria under the king's seal to the elders and nobles of Jezreel, commanding them to seek out lying witnesses, to charge Naboth before the people with cursing God and the king, and to stone him to death. They did as the queen bade them. Naboth was led out of the city, stoned to death with his sons, and left to the vultures and half-wild dogs of the streets.

Jezebel carried the tidings to Ahab. "Up and away!" she cried, "take possession of the vineyard, for Naboth is not alive, but dead." He drove out in his chariot to the coveted land, followed by his captains Jehu and Bidkar. Among the vines Elijah appeared before him suddenly. "Ha!" said Ahab, "hast thou found me, my enemy?" "I have found thee," replied Elijah; "hast thou killed and already taken possession? Hear then the word of Jehovah, 'In the very place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs shall lick thy own blood. I will bring evil upon thee; I will sweep away the race of Ahab.'"

The Lord spoke also of Jezebel the queen who stirred up her husband to wickedness, "The dogs shall eat Jezebel outside the wall of Jezreel. He of the house of Ahab that dies in the city shall be eaten of dogs and he that dies in the fields shall be eaten of the wild birds of heaven."

When Ahab heard his doom he rent his garments. He put sackcloth on his body, and he fasted; he lay down in sackcloth, and his heart failed him.

Then the Lord said to Elijah, "Hast thou seen how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Now I will have pity on his days, but I will bring the evil on his house in the days of his son."

After these things had happened Ahab prepared to recover Ramoth in Gilead from the Syrians. Jehoshaphat the king of Judah was at that time in Samaria—for a common danger had brought the two kings together,—and Ahab said to him, "Wilt thou go with me to battle?" "Ay," said Jehoshaphat, "we two as one, my people as thy people, and my horses as thy horses; but first let us take counsel of the Lord."

The kings in their royal robes sat on their thrones before the gate, and the prophets of Baal, well-nigh four hundred said, "Go up and prosper"; but Micaiah, the prophet of Jehovah, said, "I saw all Israel scattered on the hills, like sheep without a shepherd," and Ahab was angry and cast Micaiah into prison. But he said to the king of Judah, "Wear thou my robes, and I will go into battle disguised." So they took the field. The Syrian king called the two and thirty captains of his chariots and said, "Fight this day with none, great or small, except the king of Israel."

So the brunt of the onset fell upon Jehoshaphat; he was hard pressed, and he shouted his war-cry. The Syrians knew the cry, saw that it was not the king of Israel, and swept aside from him. Then a Syrian drew his bow at random, and the arrow pierced a flaw in Ahab's harness. "Turn," he said to his charioteer, "and take me out of the fight. I am hit."

Furiously the battle raged that day. The king was held up in his chariot and faced the Syrians. His blood made a pool about his feet on the chariot floor. As the sun went down, there ran a cry through the host, "Each to his own city and his own land!" Thus Ahab died. They took him to Samaria, and they buried him there. As they washed his chariot in the pool, the dogs came and licked his blood.

His son Ahaziah reigned in his stead, and he walked in the evil ways of his father and his mother. He had not been two years king when he fell through the lattice of his upper chamber, and was like to die. He sent messengers to Baal-zebub the god of Ekron, asking, "Shall I recover from this sickness?" A wild figure of a man stopped them by the way, "Is it because there is no God in Israel that you go to Baal-zebub the god of Ekron? This is the word of Jehovah to Ahaziah, 'Thou shalt not rise from the bed on which thou liest, but shalt die.'"

"This man that spoke thus to you," said the king, "what like was he?" "He was clothed in hair, with a leather girdle about him." "It was Elijah," said the king.

So Ahaziah died, and his brother Jehoram was king after him, for he had no son.

When the end of earthly days was come Elijah said to Elisha, "Abide here at Gilgal, I pray thee, for the Lord sends me on to Beth-el." "Nay," Elisha answered, "by the life of the Lord and thy own soul, I will not leave thee"; and it was the same at Beth-el and Jericho. The disciples of the prophets came out of these cities to meet them, and they said to Elisha, "Dost thou know that this day the Lord will take thy master away from thee?" "I know," said Elisha; "do not speak of it."

Elisha and his master went on their way, but fifty of the disciples of the prophets went up to the heights beyond Jericho and watched them afar off as they descended to Jordan and stood upon the brink. Then Elijah took his mantle, rolled it together, and struck the waters with it. The waters parted, this way and that, and they both passed over dry-shod. Elijah said, "Ask what thou wouldst have me do for thee before I am taken from thee." Elisha answered, "Leave me, I beseech thee, a double portion of thy spirit." "Thou askest a difficult thing; and yet if thou seest me taken

away, that will come to pass; but if thou dost not see me, it will not."

As they are going on and talking together, a chariot of fire with horses of fire separates them from each other, and Elijah is caught up into heaven in a whirlwind. Elisha sees it and cries out, "My father, my father! O thou who wast the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!" He saw him no longer, and he rent his garments for sorrow, and took up the mantle which Elijah had let fall. Then he turned back to the brink of Jordan, and striking the waters with the mantle he said, "Where is Jehovah, the God of Elijah?" The waters answered, and parted this way and that, and he passed over.

Then "the sons of the prophets" who had been watching afar off on the heights said to each other, "The spirit of Elijah rests upon Elisha"; and they went to meet him and bowed down at his feet. "Here with thy servants," they said, "are fifty stalwart men, let them go and seek thy master. It may be that the Spirit of the Lord which caught him up has cast him upon one of the mountains or into one of the valleys." Elisha said, "Do not send them." They pressed him until he was ashamed to deny them, and he said, "Send them then." Three days they sought among the hills, but they did not find him.

72. THE LITTLE CHILD OF SHUNEM.

THERE was a rich woman who lived at Shunem, on the edge of the fruitful plain of Esdraelon; and it fell out that when Elisha came by Shunem she pressed him earnestly to stay and eat. Thenceforth as often as Elisha passed that way to Carmel, he would turn aside to the friendly house. She said to her husband, "I know this is a holy man of God that so often comes our way. Let us make him a little oriel chamber, and put into it a bed and table and chair and lamp, so that he may be in quiet there when he comes to us."

When Elisha came again, he went up to this little

chamber on the wall and slept there; and wishing to do her some service in return, he bade Gehazi his servant say to her, "Thou hast troubled thyself with all this care of us—what can we do for thee? Shall we speak for thee to the king, or to the commander of his army?" But she answered, "I am living here in the midst of my own people." "Then what is to be done for her?" said Elisha. Gehazi said, "Well, she has no son, and her husband is old." Elisha said, "Call her hither"; and when she came and stood at the entrance of the chamber, Elisha said, "Next year, about this time, thou shalt have a son in thy arms." "Nay, my lord—thou man of God—do not deceive thy handmaid."

But it happened as Elisha foretold; and the child grew, and played about in the fields. There came a day when Esdraelon was like a sea of gold, with poppies and corn-flowers in it; and the little lad went to be with his father beside the reapers. But the hot sun smote him as he went, and he cried to his father, "My head, my head!" His father said to a young man, "Carry him in to his mother."

The child lay in her lap till noon, and then he died. She took him to Elisha's chamber, laid him down on the bed of the man of God, shut the door upon him, and went out. She said to her husband, "Let me have one of the young men, I pray thee, and one of the asses that I may go quickly to the man of God and come back again." "Why to-day?" he asked; "it is neither new moon nor sabbath"; and she answered, "It is all well."

To the young man she said, "Do not stop as we go unless I tell thee"; and she rode away quickly, with the young man running beside her, and she came to Carmel. Elisha saw her a long way off, and sent Gehazi to greet her, "Is all well with thee? well with thy husband? well with the child?" "All is well," she answered.

But when she came to the man of God on the hill, she fell at his feet and clasped them. Gehazi would have

thrust her aside, but Elisha rebuked him, "Let her alone. Her soul is in bitterness; and the Lord has hidden from me wherefore." Then she said, "Was it I that asked a son of my lord? Did I not say, 'Do not deceive me'?"

"Gird thyself," said Elisha to Gehazi, "take my staff, and go quickly. Greet none by the way, and return no greeting. Lay my staff upon the child's face."

The mother of the child said, "By the Lord's life and thy own soul, I will not leave thee." Elisha girt himself and ran beside her as she rode homeward.

Gehazi had hastened on before them, and had laid the staff on the child's face; but there was no voice and no heeding. He returned to meet his master, and said, "The child has not awakened." And the reapers were in the corn, and the sun was going down. When Elisha came to the house, lo, the dead child, laid upon his bed!

He went in, and shut the door, and prayed to Jehovah. He lay down above the child, put his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his; his hands on his, and stretched himself upon him. The flesh of the child grew warm. He arose, and went hither and thither in the house, returned, and stretched himself again on the child. And the child sneezed seven times and opened his eyes.

Then he bade Gehazi call the child's mother. She came, and Elisha said to her, "Take thy son." She fell at his feet. She arose and took up her son, and went out.

73. THE HEALING OF NAAMAN.

NAAMAN was the leader of the Syrian host and high in the royal favour, but the valorous shining man was a leper.

Now in one of their raids the Syrians had brought away a little maid out of Israel, and she was in the

service of Naaman's wife. She said one day to her mistress, "Would that my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria, then he would cure him of his leprosy." Naaman told the king of the little maid's saying. "Good!" said the king of Syria. "Go to Samaria; I will give thee a letter to the king of Israel."

Naaman departed with ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten suits of raiment, and delivered the letter to the king of Israel. When the king read it, he rent his garments and said, "Am I a god to make men die and to make them live, that he sends to me to cure a man of leprosy? See now, how he would fix a quarrel upon me!"

They told Elisha, and he sent word to the king, "Why didst thou rend thy garments? Let him come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel." So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stood at Elisha's door. Elisha sent a message to him, "Go and wash thee seven times in Jordan, and thy flesh shall come to thee newly, and thou shalt be pure."

Angrily Naaman turned away, saying, "I thought to myself, He will come out to meet me, he will salute me, he will call upon the name of Jehovah his God, he will pass his hand over the place and cure the leper. . . . Are not the rivers of Damascus—Abana, Pharpar—better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash me in these and be made pure?" So he turned and went his way in fury.

But his servants approached him and said, "Nay, father, had the prophet set thee some hard thing, wouldst thou not have done it? And now when he says, 'Wash thee and be pure'?"

Then Naaman went down, and plunged him into Jordan seven times; and his flesh was made new to him like a little child's flesh, and he was healed. Straightway he returned with all his train to Samaria, and came into the presence of the man of God and said, "Now I know that God there is none in all the earth but in Israel. Accept, I pray thee, an offering from thy

servant." Elisha replied, "Nay, by the Lord whose servant I am, I will not take it"; and Naaman pressed him, but Elisha refused.

Then, bearing in mind how the god of any land can be served only on his own soil, the Syrian said, "If thou wilt not take it, then I pray thee give thy servant two mule-loads of earth, for thy servant will offer holocaust and thank-offering to none other god, but to Jehovah alone. Yet may the Lord forgive me in this; when my master bows down in the house of Rimmon, and leans upon my arm, and I too bow down—may Jehovah forgive thy servant, and him bowing down in the house of Rimmon." Elisha said, "Go thou in peace!"

Naaman was yet gone but a little distance when Gehazi said to himself, "My master has been thrifty of this Syrian's gifts. God's life, I will run after and have something from him!" When Naaman saw the runner, he alighted from his chariot to meet him, and said, "Is all well?" "All is well," Gehazi answered. "My master has sent me to tell thee, 'But just now are come two disciples of the prophets from Mount Ephraim; give them, I beseech thee, a talent of silver and two suits of raiment.'" "Nay," said Naaman, "but take two talents;" pressed them on him, and gave the two talents in satchels and two changes of raiment to two of his servants, to bear before Gehazi. When they came to the hill Gehazi took these things and laid them up in the house and dismissed the Syrians.

Then he presented himself to his master. "Whence comest thou, Gehazi?" "Thy servant went no-whither," replied Gehazi. Elisha said, "My spirit was not far from thee when that Syrian alighted from the chariot to meet thee. Is this a time to take silver and raiment, and olives and vines, and flock and herd, and bondman and bondwoman? The leprosy of Naaman shall cling to thee and to thy race for ever."

Gehazi went out from Elisha's presence a leper, white as the snow.

74. THE LEPERS' SPOIL.

Now it happened, not once or twice, in the border wars that Elisha warned the king of Israel of the inroads of the Syrians, so that their ambuscades came to nought. The Syrian king suspected traitors in the camp, but one of his lords said, "It is not so, my king; it is Elisha the prophet who tells the king of Israel even what thou sayest in the secrecy of thy bed-chamber." When the king heard that the man of God was in the stronghold of Dothan, he sent a great host by night to take him; and rising early in the morning, the servant of Elisha saw that the city was encompassed with chariots and horses and a mighty company. "Alas, my master," he said to Elisha, "what are we to do?" "Never fear," he answered, "for they that are with us are more than they that are with them"; and he prayed, "Lord, open his eyes that he may see."

The Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he saw the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. The Syrians came down from the hill-sides against the city, and Elisha besought the Lord, "Strike this nation with blindness." A glamour fell upon their eyes so that all they beheld was illusion. Elisha said to them, "This is not your way, and this is not the city; follow me, and I will take you to the man you are seeking."

He led them to Samaria, and when they were entered within the walls, he said, "Lord, open the eyes of these people." The Lord opened their eyes, and they saw where they were, in the midst of their enemies. Said the king of Israel, "Shall I smite them—shall I smite them, father?" "Nay," said the man of God, "but give them meat and drink, and let them go back to their lord." The king of Israel set much food before them, and sent them freely on their way. Thereafter Syrian raiders vexed the land of Israel no more.

Long afterwards Ben-Hadad the king of Syria gathered all his forces and laid siege to Samaria. The city was hard beset; food failed, and there was such grievous famine that an ass's head, unclean as it was, sold for eighty shekels of silver, and a handful of pease for five shekels. When Jehoram the king made his round on the wall, and heard what things were done by the people in their hunger, he rent his garments (men saw it, and under the rent garments, lo! the king wore sackcloth next his skin), and swearing by the Lord to have the prophet's life that day, he sent the headsman to slay him.

Elisha was in his house sitting among the elders, when suddenly he saw in spirit the headsman coming, and he cried out, "See you how this son of a murderer has sent to take my head? Make fast the doors. Hear you not the sound of his master's feet behind him?" While he was speaking came the king himself and said, "This evil has come upon us from Jehovah, and nought hast thou done for our deliverance. What have I to hope more from Jehovah?"

Elisha said, "Hearken to the word of the Lord: To-morrow at this time they will be selling in the gate of Samaria fine wheat at a shekel a measure, and barley at two measures a shekel." Said the noble on whose arm the king leant, "Though Jehovah opened windows in heaven and rained down corn, should we see such a selling?" "Thou shalt see it with thy own eyes," said Elisha, "but thou shalt not eat of it."

Outside the gate of Samaria sat four lepers as the sun went down. The twilight deepened while they talked together. "What!" said one, "are we to sit still here till we die?" Another said, "If we think to go into the city, famine is there, and there we shall die." Said the first, "If we sit here, we shall die no less." The third said, "Why then, let us throw ourselves into the camp of the Syrians. If they leave us alive, we shall live, and if they put us to death——" "We shall be dead," said the fourth.

They got up and went their way in the dusk towards the Syrian camp. They came to the open gate of the camp; there was not a man there. For lo! Jehovah had filled the ears of the Syrians with the sound of chariots and of horses—the noise of a great army; the Syrians had said to each other, “Hark! the king of Israel has hired the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Egypt to fall upon us.” Terror had taken hold of them in the twilight; they had gone, leaving tents, horses, asses—all the camp as it was; they had fled for their lives.

The lepers went into one of the tents. They ate and drank; they seized silver and gold and garments, carried them off and buried them. They came back, entered another tent, lifted more spoil, and hid it away. Then one of them said, “We are not doing the right thing. This is a day of luck; if we keep it to ourselves till morning, we shall have to answer for it.” So they returned to the city and called the guard at the gate. “We have been down to the Syrian camp,” they said. “There is no one there. We heard no voices. Only horses and asses at their pickets; the tents all as they were.”

They woke the king with the good news. He suspected a stratagem. The Syrians knew they were starving; they were in the hills lying in ambush for them; if they went out the enemy would take the city. “There are five horses left,” said one of the king’s counsellors—“they will be as safe in field as in stable; let us see what has happened.” Two two-horse chariots were sent out, and runners were despatched on the track of the Syrian host.

They followed them to Jordan. All the way was strewn with garments and war-gear and treasure which the Syrians had flung from them in their flight.

In the morning the people streamed out in crowds from the city, and pillaged the Syrian camp; and there was fine flour at a shekel a measure, and barley meal at two measures a shekel, selling before the gate.

The captain of the guard that day was the noble on whose arm the king leant. In the crush of the people he was trampled to death. He saw the selling of the wheat and of the barley, but he ate not of either.

When these troubles were gone by it happened that Jehoram the king talked with Gehazi of all the wonders Elisha had wrought; and Gehazi told him how the man of God had raised the dead to life. That was at Shunem, in the days before the great famine, and Elisha had warned the woman, who had been good to them, saying, "Do thou go hence with thy household, and dwell where thou canst dwell, for the famine will be long and grievous"; and the woman had departed with her household into the borders of the Philistines. After that the Lord had called for the famine, and it came.

When Gehazi was still telling of these things, behold, a woman came into the presence of the king, asking for justice. Gehazi had scarce seen her when he said, "O king, this is the woman, my lord, and this is her son that Elisha brought back to life." The king questioned her. Seven years had she been in the land of the Philistines; another had taken her fields and the friendly house, and would not restore them. The king said to one of his officers, "See that she receives all that was hers, and therewith all the increase of the fields from the day she left the land."

Long ago, upon the mountain of God, the Lord had said to Elijah, "Go thy way again through the desert to Damascus, and thou shalt anoint Hazael to be king over Syria, and Jehu the son of Nimshi to be king over Israel." But Elijah had been carried up into the heavens, and his mantle had fallen upon Elisha.

So it fell out that Elisha went to Damascus. They said to Ben-Hadad the king of Syria, "The man of God has come hither." Now Ben-Hadad the king

lay there sick, and he sent Hazael his captain and forty camels laden with all that was best in Damascus to Elisha, and Hazael said, "Thy son Ben-Hadad has sent me to ask, 'Shall I recover from this sickness?'" Elisha answered, "Thou wilt say to him, 'Thou shalt recover,' yet the Lord has shown me that he will die"; and the man of God fixed his eyes upon Hazael until he changed colour, and then Elisha wept.

"Why does my lord weep?" Hazael asked. "Because I know what evil thou wilt bring upon the children of Israel. I see their burning towns, the young men put to the sword, the little children dashed to death." "What is thy servant," said Hazael, "this dog, to do such mighty deeds?" "I have seen thee king of Syria."

Hazael returned to Ben-Hadad. "What did Elisha say?" the king asked. "Thou shalt recover," answered Hazael.

On the morrow Hazael took a thick cloth, steeped it in water, and held it on the king's face. The king died. Hazael reigned in his stead.

75. THE DOGS OF JEZEBEL.

FOR twenty years and five Jehoshaphat had now been king over Judah. He had built Tarshish ships to sail to Ophir for gold but the winds had cast them away at Ezion-geber. Like Asa his father, he had all his days lifted up his heart to Jehovah; and riches were his, and honour, in plenty. When he had reigned twenty years and five he slept with his fathers, and Joram his son was king over Judah.

Joram's wife was Athaliah daughter of Ahab, and he walked with her in the wickedness of Ahab her father. Yet the Lord spared Joram for the sake of David His servant. Joram reigned eight years, and died. Ahaziah his son was twenty and two years old, he was a one-summer king over Judah, and his way was the evil way of the blood of Ahab.



The Queen of Sheba.

Israel and Judah leagued themselves together to wrest Ramoth in Gilead from Hazael the Syrian. The king of Judah was wounded and returned to Jezreel, and Ahaziah went down from the camp to visit him. Then said Elisha to one of the disciples of the prophets, "Gird thy loins and hasten to Ramoth. Seek out Jehu the son of Nimshi; take him apart into an inner chamber, and there thou shalt pour this vial of oil upon his head and say, 'This is the word of Jehovah: I have anointed thee king over Israel.' Then flee and make no stay."

The disciple found Jehu sitting in council of war with the captains. Jehu rose and went with him into the house; and the disciple poured the oil upon his head saying, "Thus saith Jehovah, 'I have anointed thee king over my people Israel. Thou shalt strike the house of Ahab thy master—so shall I avenge on Jezebel the blood of the prophets and the blood of all the servants of Jehovah. The whole house of Ahab shall perish. The dogs shall eat Jezebel, and there shall be no man to bury her.'" Then the disciple opened the door and fled from Gilead.

"What had this mad fellow to say to thee?" asked the captains. "You know the man," said Jehu, "and what he was like to say." "Not we! Come, tell us." Jehu told them all that had happened. The captains leaped to their feet, spread their mantles for royal state on the landing of the outer-stairs, sounded the trumpets, and cried, "Jehu is king!"

The gates were closed so that none should carry the news to Jezreel; and thither drove Jehu with a squadron of archers.

The watchman looked east and he looked west on Jezreel tower. He espied Jehu as he came. "I see a troop," he cried. "Send out a horseman," said Jehoram the king, "and let him ask 'Is all well?'"

Out rode a horseman to meet the strangers. "Thus says the king," he said, "'Is all well?'" "What does it matter to thee?" replied Jehu, "Pass to the

rear." Said the watchman on the tower, "The rider has met them, but he is not returning." Then a second horseman rode and came to them, saying, "Thus says the king, 'Is all well?'" "What does it matter to thee? Pass to the rear," replied Jehu. "He too has met them," said the watchman on the tower, "but he is not returning." "Harness!" said the king.

And Jehoram king of Israel and Ahaziah king of Judah went out each in his chariot, and they met Jehu in the field that was the heritage of Naboth. Jehoram said, "Is all well, Jehu?" "What can be well," he answered, "while thy mother Jezebel fills the land with her idols and her sorceries?" Swinging his horses round, Jehoram cried, "Treachery, Ahaziah!" and fled. But Jehu seized his bow in a mighty hand, and drove an arrow between the king's shoulders and through his heart, and Jehoram sank down in his chariot.

At the sight Ahaziah fled westward. "Him too in the chariot," cried Jehu, "smite him." Jehu's men pursued, wounded him grievously at the ascent of Gur, but he escaped to Megiddo.

Said Jehu to Bidkar his captain, "Take this king and cast him into the field of Naboth the Jezreelite. Dost thou remember the saying of Jehovah when thou and I came hither on horseback with his father Ahab? 'Yesterday,' said the Lord, 'I saw the blood of Naboth and his sons; in this same field of Naboth I will requite thee.' Cast him into the field."

Jehu drove on to Jezreel. At the news of his coming Jezebel had painted her eyes, adorned her imperious head. She looked out of the window of the gate-tower and called down to him as he whirled in, "Is all well—thou new Zimri, murderer of thy master?" Jehu looked up at the window, pulled in his horses; "Who is for me?" he cried, "who?" Two or three eunuchs signalled to him from the window. "Then fling her down!" he said.

They flung her down from the window. Her blood

reddened the wall and splashed the horses; and Jehu drove over her.

He strode into the palace, stayed his wild mood with meat and drink; then he said, "See to this accursed woman, and bury her, for she is a king's daughter."

They went out to bury her, but they found no more of her than the skull, the feet, and the palms of her hands. They returned and told him. "This too," said Jehu, "the Lord foretold by His servant Elijah—'Dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel outside the wall of Jezreel; she shall be spread like muck on the fields, and no man shall be able to say, This is Jezebel!'"

Jehu destroyed the whole house of Ahab, root and branch, in Jezreel and Samaria. Then he proclaimed a great sacrifice to Baal. "Ahab," he said, "served Baal little; Jehu will serve him much." Prophets, worshippers, priests, the people of Baal came in from all parts of Israel. Jehu had them clothed in white raiment. The courts of Baal were thronged with them. As the altar fires were kindling he gave the word to four score men at arms. "In and slay them!" They slew them; they broke and burnt the impious statues; they shattered the great stone idol of the sun; they pulled down the temple, and for many a year the place lay loathsome and unclean.

Yet the golden calves of Jeroboam stood untouched in Dan and Beth-el.

For eight and twenty years of trouble Jehu was king, and Hazael ravaged and subdued all the heritage of Israel east of Jordan. Jehu died, and his son Jehoahaz reigned in his stead.

76. ELISHA'S LAST SICKNESS.

AHAZIAH died of his wounds at Megiddo, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David. His mother Athaliah destroyed the royal children to make

herself queen over Judah; but the dead king's sister Jehosheba saved his baby son Joash. Now Jehosheba was the wife of the high-priest Jehoiada, and for six years the child grew up in safety under the palms and in the secret places of the temple.

In the seventh year the high-priest won over the centurions of the Carian mercenaries in the queen's guard, showed them the king's son, and swore them to allegiance. Troops of Levites were called up from all the cities in Judah, and armed with the spears and shields of his mighty men which David had hung in the temple. The palace gates and the approaches to the house of the Lord were held by the mercenaries, and on a sabbath day the little lad, encircled with naked swords, was anointed and crowned, and a roll of the covenant of Jehovah was laid upon his head. The silver trumpets sounded; the people clapped their hands and raised a great shout of "God save the king!"

The queen heard the clamour and the noise of people running. She hastened to the temple. There stood the child-king at his pillared seat, with the heralds and the princes of Israel and the armed men near him; and court and cloister resounded with singing and minstrelsy and the rejoicing of the people.

Athaliah rent her robes and cried, "Treason, treason!" but Jehoiada said to the captains of the Carians, "Take her forth, let her not be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord." They led her from the temple and across the bridge of Solomon, and at the horsemen's gate of the palace they trampled her to death under the hoofs of the horses.

Then a solemn covenant was made in Judah that the people should be the people of Jehovah. The temple of Baal was tumbled to the ground, his images were broken to pieces, his priest Mattan was slain at the altar. But the high-places were not destroyed, and there the people still sacrificed and burnt incense to the Lord. So twenty years and more passed away.

And in the twenty-third year of the reign of Joash Jehoahaz son of Jehu came to the throne of Israel. He walked in the way of the golden calves and the trees and tents of Astarté; and the Lord was angered and He suffered Hazael the Syrian and his son to harass Israel till they were as dust of the threshing-floor. Jehoahaz died, and his son Jehoash was king after him, and was no better than he.

In the kingdom of Judah Joash reigned forty years. While Jehoiada lived to counsel him, he stood in the fear of the Lord, but the high-priest, grown very old, died and was buried for honour's sake among the kings in the city of David. Then Joash was overruled by the princes of Judah. They angered the Lord with their idols and Astarté trees, and when Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, rebuked them, the king stoned him to death at the threshold of the temple. Joash had forgotten the kindness of Jehoiada his father.

That year the Syrians came up from the plundering of Gath; the princes of Judah were slain and scattered before them; Joash bought peace, and the royal treasure, the gold of the temple, the hallowed gifts of his fathers, kings of Judah, were carried off to Damascus. Struck down by disease, Joash was murdered on his bed by his servants. He was buried in the city of David, but for him there was no place in the sepulchres of the kings.

In those days Elisha lay in his last sickness, and Jehoash the king of Israel went down to visit him. He wept on the aged seer's face, and "O father, father," he said, "thou chariot and cavalry of Israel!" Elisha's heart quickened as he heard his greeting; he sat up and said to the king, "Open the eastern window, and stretch thy bow." Jehoash stretched his bow against the east, and the man of God laid his hands on the young king's hands and said, "Shoot!" He shot. "'Tis the arrow of Jehovah," said Elisha, "delivering thee from the Syrians. Thou shalt cut the Syrians to

pieces at Aphek. Take the arrows and shoot out into the field." Thrice Jehoash shot an arrow, then lowered his hands. "Five times—six times—thou shouldst have shot," said Elisha hotly; "then hadst thou made an end of the Syrians. Now thou shalt beat them thrice."

So Elisha died, a very old, fiery-hearted man. And Jehovah, remembering His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, took pity on Israel. Hazael the Syrian died, and three times Jehoash overthrew his son the third Ben-Hadad and recovered the lost cities east of Jordan.

77. THE FATE OF THE TEN TRIBES.

WHEN these days were gone by, this was the story of Judah.

For nine and twenty years Amaziah the son of Joash was king. Like his father he was godly at the beginning. He subdued the children of Edom and captured the wondrous rock-city of Selah;* but he brought back the strange gods of Mount Seir and worshipped them, and the Lord delivered him into the hands of the king of Israel whom he had provoked to battle. Jehoash brought him in chains to Jerusalem, broke down four hundred cubits of the city wall, plundered the palace, and carried off the sacred treasures of the temple. And the end of Amaziah was evil, for his own officers conspired against him; he fled to Lachish, and there they slew him.

The people made his son Uzziah king. He was sixteen years old, and for fifty and two years he reigned. The Lord was with him when he broke down the walls of the Philistine cities, smote the Arabs in Gur-baal, and built Elath near Ezion-geber, dreaming of tall ships and voyages for gold. Jerusalem he crowned with towers, and set on the towers strong engines of

* Petra, sculptured out of the many-coloured sandstone cliffs under Mount Hor.

war. His sheep and cattle ranged over the wilderness of the south, the downs of Gilead and the plains of the west, and he dug cisterns and built refuge towers for them. His ploughmen were in the valleys, his vine-dressers on the hills, for he loved husbandry. His name spread far abroad for a mighty king. Then in the high-tide of his power he grew proud of heart, and impiously entered the holy place to burn incense on the golden altar. The priests stopped him in his profanation, and as he stood in fury by the altar of incense with the censer in his hand, leprosy broke out upon his forehead. The priests drove him from the holy place—he himself fled in terror, a leper. His son Jotham ruled in his stead. Thenceforth Uzziah lived alone, a leper to the day of his death, and they buried him in a leper's grave.

Sixteen years reigned Jotham. He was a godly king and prosperous; and his son Ahaz was king in Jerusalem after him.

In Israel when Jehoash who pillaged the house of the Lord was dead his son, the second Jeroboam, was crowned, and he ruled for one and forty years. Though he worshipped the graven images of his great namesake, Jehovah took pity on Israel and would not suffer it to be blotted out, and Jeroboam recovered Damascus and the old frontiers east of Jordan from Hamath to Moab and the Dead Sea.

In these days Amos the herdman of Tekoa left his toil among the cattle and sycamore-trees on the edge of the Judæan wilderness and cried before the golden calf of Beth-el—doom on the rich and pitiless of Israel, who lay on ivory couches, ate the lambs of the flock, drank wine in bowls and sang to viols; who oppressed the poor and crushed the needy, bought and sold men for a pair of shoes, and turned right and justice into gall and wormwood. "They shall pass away into captivity, far from their land," said the Lord, "yet I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob."

Jeroboam's son, Zachariah, reigned six months,

and was murdered by Shallum; Shallum reigned a month, and was murdered by Menahem; Menahem reigned ten years—an evil king—and bribed Pul the great king of Assyria with a thousand talents of silver. His son Pekahiah succeeded him, and was murdered in his second year by Pekah, an officer of his. In Pekah's day Tiglath-pileser the great king swept over Gilead and Galilee, and drove Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh and Naphtali like cattle into Assyria. Then Pekah was murdered by Hoshea, who reigned in his stead.

And in these days the man of God, Hosea, cried aloud the warning and the appeal of Jehovah, "The calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces. They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the storm. O Israel, return unto the Lord, thy God, and I will be to thee as the dew, and thou shalt blossom as the lily." But they paid no heed; they worshipped the host of heaven, set up images under every green tree, sacrificed their children in the fires of Moloch, and sold themselves to do evil.

In the ninth year of Hoshea Samaria fell, and Sargon the great king carried all Israel captive out of the sight of the Lord. Judah and Benjamin alone were left. Heathen tribes of the east were drafted into the empty cities. These men of Cutha and Ava and Sepharvaim were tormented by lions which had waxed bold in the wasted land. "It is the God of the land who hath sent them to slay us," they said, "because we know not His worship." So Sargon sent them an Israelite priest who taught them at Beth-el, and they added Jehovah to the other gods of their worship, the goat-god, the lion-god, the dog-headed god, Adrammelech and the Lady Annamelech to whom they burnt their children, and Tartak the image of iniquity.

78. NINEVEH AND THE GOURD-VINE.

JONAH the man of God was the son of Amittai of the Wine-press by the Well, in the hills beyond Nazareth. In the days of the second Jeroboam the Lord said to him, "Arise and go forth to Nineveh, that great city, and cry doom on it, because of its wickedness." But Jonah hastened instead to Joppa, and took ship with the sea-farers, thinking to flee to Tarshish, far from the presence of the Lord. The Lord beset them with stress of tempest as they sailed, and the sea-farers cried out in terror, each man to his god, and cast their wares overboard to lighten the ship. The master mariner found Jonah fast asleep and awakened him, "Up, sleeper! and call upon thy God that we may not perish."

Then the sea-farers casts lot to discover which of them had brought down this calamity of weather, and the lot fell on Jonah. "Whence art thou," they asked, "and what hast thou done?" and Jonah told them how he was fleeing from Jehovah. "What then shall we do with thee?" "Take me," he said, "and cast me into the sea, and there will fall a calm." "Not we," said the sea-farers, and took to their oars, working hard to bring the ship to land; but when they saw there was nothing else for it, they prayed God to acquit them of shedding innocent blood and cast Jonah into the deep. Straightway the wild weather was laid; and the sea-farers were filled with a great awe, and kindled fire and offered sacrifice to Jehovah.

But a huge fish saved Jonah and cast him up on the shore; and the Lord said to him, "Arise now, and go to Nineveh, and cry doom as I bade thee." A wonder-great city was Nineveh, and for three days men fared ere they came through it. A day's journey within it Jonah went crying aloud, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh will be overthrown!" The people heard the warning and had faith in God. The king rose from his throne, laid aside his robe of state, put on sack-cloth and sat in ashes. All the people went clad in

sackcloth; sackcloth was laid on the sheep and cattle, and man and beast ate not, neither did they drink, and a voice of mourning went up to God. "Who can tell," said the king, "but that God will turn and forego His burning wrath so that we may not perish?"

Then Jonah went out to a hill upon the east and wove him a lodge of branches, and sat under its shadow, waiting to see what should befall the city. But God saw how the people repented of their wickedness, and forbore to afflict them. Then was Jonah much aggrieved by His loving-kindness; and "I beseech Thee, O Jehovah," he said, "is not this just as I said when I was in my own country, and was minded to avert it by fleeing to Tarshish? For I knew that Thou art a God compassionate and pitiful, slow to anger and of great goodness, and forbearing in Thy judgments. Now I pray Thee take my life, for sooner would I die than live," for Jonah spoke in his wilfulness and begrudged any good to Assyria. The Lord answered, "Hast thou ground to be vexed?"

God caused a gourd-vine to spring up and spread its leaves over the withered branches of the lodge so that Jonah might solace his soul in its shade; and Jonah was very glad of the vine. But God sent a caterpillar which gnawed the vine, and next day in the red of the morning it withered. When the sun rose He caused a sultry wind to blow out of the east; and the sun beat on Jonah's head until he swooned and longed to die.

God said, "Hast thou ground to be vexed on account of the gourd-vine?" "I have ground to be vexed to death," Jonah answered. Then the Lord said, "Thou art grieved at the loss of the gourd-vine; yet it cost thee no toil; it was not of thy growing; it sprang up in a night and it perished in a night; and should not I grieve to lose Nineveh which I made so great, that city wherein there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand little children who do not know their right hand from their left—and much cattle?"

79. JERUSALEM DESTROYED.

PEKAH was still king in Samaria when Ahaz the son of Jotham came to the throne of Judah. For sixteen years he ruled, an evil and disastrous king, who sacrificed his children in the valley of Hinnom, and put out the lamps and sealed the doors of the temple of the Lord. When he died they gave him no place among the kings of his line, but buried him in Jerusalem.

Hezekiah his son restored the pomp and solemn worship of Jehovah, broke in pieces the bronze serpent of the wilderness and its altar of incense, and sought to make the children of Abraham a holy and united people. The northern tribes laughed him to scorn, yet many came up from Asher and Manasseh and Zebulun to the passover, purged the city of its idolatry, and destroyed the images and Astarté trees in the land of Judah and Benjamin.

Then when Samaria had fallen and Israel had been led captive and the years had gone by, the hordes of Sennacherib, son of Sargon, invaded Judah, and he sent up the Tartan, his chief captain, and the Rabsaris, his chief eunuch, and the Rabshakeh, his chief cup-bearer, to demand the surrender of the holy city. Standing before the wall, the cup-bearer cried aloud in the language of the Jews so that the hearts of the people should be shaken like trees in the forest, "Hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria: 'Wherein do you trust that you give yourselves over to die of famine and thirst? Let not Hezekiah delude you, for he cannot deliver you. Nor yet let him persuade you to trust in Jehovah. Has any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? And have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? How much less shall your God deliver you! Surrender therefore, make peace, pay tribute; and let every man eat of his vine and fig-tree and drink of his well until

I take you away to a land like your own, a land of corn and wine.’”

The Jews answered not a word, for so the king had commanded, but Hezekiah went in sackcloth into the house of the Lord, and sent his ministers and the elders of the priests in sackcloth to the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah said, “This is the answer of the Lord, ‘Be not afraid of the words thou hast heard in the mouths of the servants of Assyria blaspheming me. Lo, I will send a spirit into him, so that at the hearing of a rumour he shall return to his own country; and in his own country he shall die by the sword.’”

At the setting of the sun the mighty host of Assyria, with their chariots and horses, settled about their camp-fires. Darkness fell and silence. Without light and without sound the angel of the Lord passed through the camp that night. Those who awoke in the dawn found the camp filled with dead men, a hundred and eighty four thousand.

Sennacherib king of Assyria departed in fear to Assyria. Long afterwards, when he was worshipping in the temple of Nisroch his god, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer slew him and fled to the land of Ararat, and his son Esar-haddon reigned.

Manasseh was twelve years old when he succeeded his father Hezekiah, and fifty and five years he reigned and did all manner of evil; but when he had been led to Babylon with the captive’s ring through his nose he turned to the Lord for help, and the Lord brought him back to his kingdom. Amon his son, who reigned after him, was no less wicked, and his servants murdered him.

Amon’s son Josiah was but eight years old when the people made him king. While he was still young he sought after the God of David his father, and in the twelfth year he began to purge the land of idolatry from Judah to Naphtali. In the fair valley of Hinnom under Mount Zion he overthrew Moloch and defiled the

burning-place of little children. He took away the horses of the sun and burnt his chariot, and destroyed the heathen temples on the Mount of Olives. At Beth-el he burnt the bones of the priests of Baal on Baal's altar, and ground the altar itself to powder. Then looking round, "What pillar is that?" he asked. The men of Beth-el said, "It is the sepulchre of the man of God, who came from Judah and foretold these things which thou hast done." "Let him alone," said the king; "let no man move his bones."

The treasures of the temple had been plundered; the splendid building had been despoiled for the adoration of strange gods and the starry host. While Josiah was restoring it, the priest Hilkiah found a roll of the law given by Moses. When the king heard it read, he rent his garments in dismay and grief, and summoned a gathering of the people. The sacred book was read to them, and Josiah standing in his place, renewed the ancient covenant of the wilderness. Then was observed such a passover as had not been since the days of the Judges.

But the Lord who knew the hearts of this people was not moved from His wrath against Judah. "I will put Judah out of my sight," He said, "as I have put away Israel; I will cast off this city of Jerusalem which I chose and the house of which I said, 'There shall my name be.'"

In these days Nineveh had fallen; the Medes and Babylonians had divided the Assyrian empire between them. Egypt was the first tributary power to throw off the yoke, and in the thirty-first year of Josiah's reign Necho king of Egypt set out on a great expedition to push back its frontier to the Euphrates. He advanced along the Syrian coast to the plain of Esdraelon. Either in loyalty to the king of Babylon, or in dread of Egyptian supremacy, the Jewish king encountered him on the ridges of Megiddo. Necho warned him to stand aside, "What have I to do with

thee, king of Judah? I have not come up against thee. God is with me, and do thou forbear from opposing God." Josiah would not be turned from his purpose. He disguised himself for the battle, fell before the Egyptian archers, and was brought mortally wounded to Jerusalem.

All Judah mourned for him. Jeremiah sang his dirge, foreseeing evil days: "Weep not for the dead, neither bemoan him; but weep sore for him that goes away; for he shall return no more, nor see his native country." Each year, on the fatal day of Megiddo, the singing-men and singing-women bewailed him in their lamentations.

His younger son Jehoahaz was crowned; but within three months Necho, returning victorious, laid the country under tribute, deposed Jehoahaz (who died an exile in Egypt), and made his elder brother, Eliakim, a royal vassal with a new name, Jehoiakim. And Jehoiakim set up again all the idols and altars and Astarté trees which his father had swept out of the land.

On a second expedition to the Euphrates the king of Egypt was routed at Carchemish; and Nebuchadnezzar—the great eagle with long many-coloured wings of mighty sweep—appeared before Jerusalem. Jehoiakim was suffered to become a vassal of Babylon, but the conqueror stripped the temple of its gold and its sacred vessels as a trophy for his god, and sent to Babylon Daniel and Hananiah and other fair lads of royal blood and princely race as hostages. Three years afterwards Jehoiakim rebelled. He was taken in chains before the great king, brought back to Jerusalem, and put to death. His body was dragged beyond the gate, and cast out to the heat of day and the frost of night, and no man lamented him.

For three months his son Jehoiakin reigned. Once more Nebuchadnezzar beset the holy city, plundered what was left of Solomon's golden vessels in the temple, and carried off into captivity Jehoiakin and all the

royal house, all the princes and valiant men, all the craftsmen and smiths of Jerusalem, ten thousand people. In that sorrowful outgoing Ezekiel the prophet bore his share. None were left but the poorest in the land, and Nebuchadnezzar made Mattaniah, the brother of Jehoahaz, king over them, and changed his name to Zedekiah. Zedekiah was one and twenty years old when he began to reign and he reigned for eleven years.

In the sixth month of the sixth year this is what was seen by Ezekiel, who was far away beside the river of Chebar. For the prophet was rapt in the visions of God to Jerusalem, and he beheld on the threshold of the temple the glory of the God of Israel which had departed from His seat between the cherubims. On the northern side of the brazen altar of sacrifices stood an idol; and the Lord said to him, "Son of man, seest thou what they do—seest thou the abominations wherewith the house of Israel drives me forth from my sanctuary?" Ezekiel came to the door of the secret chambers in the rock beneath the temple, and God said, "Go in and see." The prophet went in; and the walls around were pictured with all manner of reptiles and detestable beasts; and seventy of the elders of Israel stood and worshipped, each with a censer in his hand, so that there rose a thick cloud of incense. "Son of man," said the Lord, "dost thou see what the elders of Israel do in the dark, for they say 'Jehovah sees us not, Jehovah has forsaken the land'?" Once more Ezekiel came to the northern side of the great altar, and women were sitting there weeping for Tammuz; and the Lord said, "Dost thou see, son of man?" At the entrance of the temple, between the porch and the altar, there were about five and twenty men, with their backs to the temple of the Lord and their faces towards the east, and they bowed down and worshipped the sun.

God said, "Seest thou, son of man? Is it not enough for the house of Judah to commit these abomi-

nations, but they must fill the land with violence, and never cease to anger me? Therefore I shall deal in fury, mine eye shall not pity, neither shall I spare. They shall cry aloud in mine ears, and I shall not hear them." Then the Lord called with a resounding voice, "O you who are to chastise the city, come hither, each with his weapon in his hand."

Zedekiah too rebelled against the great king, and in the tenth month of his ninth year Nebuchadnezzar beleaguered Jerusalem. For a year and a half the city was ringed round with iron, and the people were starving when the Babylonians stormed in at midnight. Then began a ruthless slaughter in the stately courts of the temple. Young and old, men and women, were massacred without pity; maids and little children lay dead in the streets.

Zedekiah and his guards escaped through the king's gardens, crossed the Kedron, and fled over Olivet. He was captured on the plain of Jericho and taken before Nebuchadnezzar. His sons were slain before his face; his eyes were put out and he was carried in two chains of bronze to Babylon.

For the last time the temple was pillaged. The great bronze pillars of Solomon, with their wreathed work and pomegranates, and the sea of bronze were broken up and taken away. Temple and palace were set on fire; Jerusalem was burnt to the ground; the very walls were levelled. All that escaped the sword, except the poor who were left to till the vineyards and the fields, were driven into captivity.

So the Lord made an end of the kingdom of Judah.

80. THE FORGOTTEN DREAM.

AMONG the fair and noble lads who had been taken as hostages to the court of Babylon in the days of king Jehoiakim none found such favour with the prince of the eunuchs as Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. He changed their names to Belteshazzar, Shadrach,

Meshach and Abed-nego. They were taught by the most learned of the Chaldean sages; but God, who had given them their winsomeness, gave them also knowledge, and skill in letters and lore and wisdom; and to Daniel His gift was clear-seeing into the meaning of visions and dreams.

Now it befell in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar reigning alone that the great king dreamed dreams which troubled his spirit, so that sleep left him. He called together the magicians, the astrologers, the enchanters, and the Chaldeans, and said to them, "I have dreamed a dream; my spirit is troubled, and I would know what the dream was." "O king, live for ever!" the Chaldeans answered, "Let thy servants know the dream, and they will read it for thee." "The thing has slipped from me," said Nebuchadnezzar. "It is for you to tell me the dream and the interpretation of it. If you cannot, you shall be cut to pieces and your houses turned into ash-heaps; but if you make known the dream and the meaning of it, you shall have guerdon and gifts and great honours." Said the Chaldeans, "There is not a man on the earth who can tell what the king asks; and never has a king, however mighty, required the like of any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. There is none can tell the king—only the gods, whose dwelling is not among men."

Whereupon the great king fell into red rage and ordered all the wise men of Babylon to be put to death. But Daniel, when they sought him to slay him, went in to the king Nebuchadnezzar and prayed for time to answer him; and he and his companions Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah besought the Lord to save them from destruction, and the rest of the wise men of Babylon. In a vision of the night the secret was revealed to Daniel, and "Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever," he said, "for wisdom and might are His." Then to Arioch the captain of the king's guard he said, "Do not put the wise men of Babylon

to death; but take me in to the presence of the king, and I will answer him."

The great king said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, "Canst thou make known to me the dream I dreamed, and the interpretation of it?" "What the king asks," Daniel replied, "is a secret which the wise men and the astrologers and the magicians and the soothsayers cannot discover to the king. But there is a God in the heavens who reveals secrets and who has shown to king Nebuchadnezzar what shall come to pass hereafter. This was thy dream. For thoughts came up—and thou lying on thy bed—as to what should be in the days that are to come.

"O king, thou wast looking, and thou didst see a great statue. It was immense, of exceeding splendour; it stood before thee, and its aspect was terrible. Its head was of pure gold; its breast and its arms were of silver; its belly and its thighs of brass; its legs of iron, its feet in part of iron, in part of clay. Thou didst see it until a stone, detached but by no hand, struck the feet of iron and clay and broke them to pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold were ground together and were carried away by the wind like chaff from the summer threshing-floors. But the stone which struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

"That was thy dream; this is the interpretation. O king, thou art king of kings, for the God of heaven hath given thee kingship and power and strength and glory; thou art this head of gold. After thee shall arise a kingdom less than thine; then a third kingdom, of brass, which shall rule over the earth; and there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, yet mingled with the weakness of clay. In the days of these kings the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed and which shall not pass under the dominion of another people; but it shall be the stone detached without hands; it shall break up all these kingdoms and shall itself stand for ever."

Then king Nebuchadnezzar cast himself down and worshipped the spirit of the holy gods in Daniel, and ordered a sacrifice of perfumes to be made to him. He raised him to greatness, gave him presents many and costly, and made him ruler of all the province of Babylon and prince over all the wise men. But Daniel prayed the king to place the province in charge of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, and he himself sat in the king's gate.

81. THE SON OF THE GODS.

IN days long after these Nebuchadnezzar the king made a golden image, and he set it up in the plain of Dura, the vast plain in front of the great wall of Babylon. It was set up on a pillar all overlaid with gold, and the breadth of the pillar was nine feet and the height of it ten times nine. The satraps, the prefects and the governors, the judges and treasurers and all the chiefs of the provinces came at the king's mandate to the dedication of the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

They stood before the golden image at the hour of the morning prayer; far away men saw it shining like a pillar of light in the sunrise; and all the plain was many-coloured with the garments of a very great multitude out of all lands. Then a herald cried with a mighty voice, "O peoples, nations, and languages, heed the command. When you hear the sound of the horn, the pipe, the harp, the sackbut, the dulcimer, the bagpipe, and all kinds of music, you shall fall down and adore the golden image which king Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Whoso does not fall down nor adore shall be cast that moment into a kiln of fire."

Now when the peoples, nations, and languages had cast themselves down and worshipped at the sound of that music, there came Chaldean priests to the king and said, "Certain Jews there are to whom thou gavest the province of Babylon in charge—Shadrach,

Meshach, and Abed-nego. They make no account of thee, O king; thy gods they do not serve, and they worship not the golden image which thou hast set up."

Then the king in fury ordered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego to be brought before him. "Is it," he said, "of set purpose, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, that you serve not my gods, and worship not the golden image I have set up? Bow down now and adore at the sound of the music, lest you be cast into a kiln of fire. For who is the God that will deliver you out of my hand?"

"There is no need to answer that," they said, "since God will answer; for the God we serve can save us in the kiln of fire, and He will deliver us out of thy hand, O king." Then was Nebuchadnezzar beside himself with rage, and he bade them fire the kiln to a seven-fold heat. They bound the three and cast them, in their robes and girdles and mitres, into the fire; and so fierce were the flames that they who cast them in were slain by the blast.

Suddenly the eyes of Nebuchadnezzar were opened. He started up in terror, and said to his counsellors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" "Assuredly, O king," they answered. "Behold, now," said the king, "I see four men unbound walking in the midst of the fire; they are unharmed; and the aspect of the fourth is that of a son of the gods." Then Nebuchadnezzar approached the entrance of the burning kiln, and cried out, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, you servants of the God over all, come forth to me."

They came out of the midst of the fire. The satraps, the prefects, the governors and the counsellors of the king saw that the fire had no power on the bodies of these men; not a hair of their heads was scorched, and there was no smell of the fire on their garments.

King Nebuchadnezzar blessed the God of Shadrach,

Meshach, and Abed-nego, who had sent His angel to deliver His servants trusting in Him; and he made a decree that any man, of whatever tongue or nation, speaking evil of the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, should be cut to pieces, and his house made an ash-heap, "for," said the king, "there is no other god like Him to deliver." And he advanced the three to great honour and power in the province.

82. BY THE RIVERS OF BABYLON.

JERUSALEM had become heaps, and the mountain of the holy house like the high-places in the forest, and the jackal wailed among the ruins of Zion. The landless people were learning in exile how evil a thing and bitter it was to forsake the Lord God of Israel; yet in their toil and sufferings they found comfort in the warnings and promises which the prophets had declared to them aforetime in vain.

They remembered the words which the Lord had spoken to Jeremiah: "After the seventy years for Babylon have been accomplished, I will visit you, and fulfil my good word towards you, by bringing you again to this place. For I know the designs I have formed for you, designs of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. You will call upon me, and you shall go forth. You will pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek for me, and you shall find me, if you seek for me with all your heart."

They gazed upon Babylon in its splendour—immense, four-square, with the blue breadth of the Euphrates rolling through it; its hundred gates of bronze alive with people coming and going, its moated bulwarks fifty fathoms high, with room for four chariots to pass each other on top. The gorgeous palaces, built on high earthworks, were sculptured with strange imagery. The temples rose in ascending stages, and each stage was of the colour devoted to one of the lights of heaven. The hanging gardens, with their

green hills, giant forest-trees, flowering thickets, cool lodges and running brooks, were borne aloft on brick-work piled arch above arch, and reminded the favourite wife of the great king of her mountain home.

And as the exiles gazed they recalled the doom foretold by the prophet Isaiah : “ Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, and the beauty and boast of the Chaldeans, shall be as Sodom and Gomorrah when God destroyed them. It shall never again be inhabited; there the Arab shall not pitch his tent, nor shall the shepherds make their fold there. But creatures of the waste shall be in it; its houses shall be full of owls; ostriches shall dwell there, and there shall the wild goats skip; jackals shall howl in its palaces and wild dogs in its pleasant halls.”

Among the rivers of Babylon, the network of canals and streams which turned the boundless plain into corn-lands and date-forests, there arose a singer, and this was his song :

By the rivers of Babylon,
There we sat down, yea, we wept,
When we remembered Zion.
On the willow-trees in the midst
We hung up our harps.

For they that led us captive asked of us a song,
They that despoiled us would have mirth—
“ Sing us one of the songs of Zion.”
“ How shall we sing the songs of the Lord
In a strange land ? ”

If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
Let my right hand forget its minstrelsy !

Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth,
If I remember not thee—
If I make not Jerusalem
The crown of my joy.

Be mindful, O Lord, of the day of Jerusalem,
Remember it against the children of Edom,
Who said, “ Raze it, raze it
To the very foundations ! ”

O daughter of Babylon, doomed to destruction,
Happy he that repays thee
As thou hast served us—
Happy he that takes thy little ones,
And dashes them on the rock.

And a living voice from the river of Chebar still spoke to them in visions. For the hand of the Lord was laid upon Ezekiel, and he was carried away in the spirit and set down in the midst of a plain that was full of bones. The Lord made him pass near them all about the plain, and they lay on the ground very many and dry in the sun.

The Lord said to him, "Son of man, can these bones live?" Ezekiel answered, "Lord God, Thou knowest." God bade him prophesy of the bones, and Ezekiel said, "O you dry bones, thus saith the Lord, 'I shall bring a breath into you, and you shall live and know that I am the Lord.'" As Ezekiel prophesied there was a noise and a stir upon the plain, and the bones came together, each bone to its bone; and he saw how the sinews and the flesh came upon them and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath in them.

God said to him, "Prophesy to the wind and say, 'O breath, come in from the four winds, and blow upon these men slain and let them live again.'" So Ezekiel prophesied, and the breath of life went into them; they lived, and stood up on their feet, an exceeding great army.

Then said the Lord to Ezekiel, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Prophesy and say to them, 'I will open your graves, I will raise you up out of your graves, O my people, and bring you into the land of Israel; and you shall know that I am the Lord.'" "

After this, Nebuchadnezzar, in the pride of his power, had a dream which filled him with dread. He beheld, and there was a great tree in the midst of the earth. The height of it reached into heaven, and the

vision of it to the ends of all the earth. Fair was its leafage; its fruit was enough for all living things. The beasts of the wild had shadow under it; the birds of the air dwelt in its branches. Out of the heavens descended one of the holy watchers and cried aloud, "Fell the tree, lop off its branches, scatter leaf and fruit. Let the beasts flee from under it, and from its branches the birds. Yet leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with bronze and iron among the grass of the field. Let it be wet with the dew of heaven; let it share with the beasts the grass of the earth for its portion, until time passes over it sevenfold."

Of all the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans and diviners, there was none that could read the dream; but Daniel, in whom was the holy spirit of God, made known its meaning. And all that he foretold came upon Nebuchadnezzar the king.

For at the end of twelve months, as the king walked on the pavement of the palace roof and looked abroad over the golden city, he said, "Is this not Babylon the great, which I have built as the king's house by the might of my power and for the fame of my magnificence?" While the words were yet in his mouth, a voice fell from heaven, "Thy kingdom has passed away from thee. Thou shalt be driven out from among men, and shalt dwell with the beasts, and eat grass like oxen, and time shall pass sevenfold over thee until thou knowest that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever He will."

In that hour madness came upon Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven out from among men. His man's heart was turned to the heart of a beast. He was bound with iron and bronze. His body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hair had grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws.

"At the end of the destined days," said the king afterwards, "I raised my eyes to heaven and my reason came back to me. I blessed the Most High; I praised and glorified Him who lives for ever. The glory of

my kingdom, my magnificence and my power were restored to me. Now I extol the King of heaven, all whose works are true and His ways are just, and He can abase them that walk in pride."

These things were written by king Nebuchadnezzar to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth.

83. THE MAN OF UZ.

PERHAPS it was about this time and in this land of exile that one of the great unknown singers of Judah wrote the poem of the man of Uz.

In the land of Uz, on the edge of the great desert, there was a man whose name was Job. Whole-hearted he was and upright, fearing God and shunning evil.

He had seven sons and three daughters; and in wealth he was the greatest of the Children of the East, for he had seven thousand head of sheep, and three thousand camels, and oxen five hundred yoke, and five hundred she-asses, and a numerous household, men and women. After the seven-day feasts when his sons ate and drank with their sisters at each other's houses turn about, Job would rise early and make burnt-offerings for each of them, for he would say, "Perchance my sons have sinned and forsaken God in their hearts."

On the day when the sons of God came into the presence of the Lord, there came also the dark angel, the Adversary. The Lord said to him, "Whence dost thou come?" "From ranging the earth," he answered, "and from going up and down in it." The Lord said, "Hast thou observed my servant Job? There is not one like him in the earth. He is whole-hearted and upright, fearing God, and shunning evil." "For nothing?" asked the Adversary. "Hast Thou not put a hedge of favour around him, and his house, and all he has? Do but stretch out Thy hand and touch his possessions, and he will disown Thee to Thy face."

“Take all that is his,” said the Lord; “but lay not thy hand upon him.”

On a day when the sons and daughters of Job were feasting in their eldest brother’s house, a runner came to Job and said, “The oxen were ploughing, the she-asses feeding beside them; down swooped the Sabean, lifted them, and put the man-servants to the sword. I alone have escaped to tell thee.”

He was still speaking when another came. “God’s fire,” he said, “fell from heaven, burned among the flocks and the shepherds, and destroyed them. I alone have escaped to tell thee.”

He was still speaking when there came another and said, “The Chaldeans in three bands rushed in on the camels, carried them off, and slew the man-servants. I alone have escaped to tell thee.”

He was still speaking when yet another came. “Thy sons and daughters,” he said, “were eating and drinking wine in the house of thy first-born; a great wind came out over the desert and struck the four corners of the house; it fell upon thy children, and they are dead. I alone have escaped to tell thee.”

Job arose, rent his robe and shaved his head; then he cast himself on the ground and worshipped, and said, “Naked from my mother’s bosom I came; naked into the bosom of earth I return. Jehovah gave; Jehovah took away; blessed be Jehovah’s name!”

Again on the day when the sons of God came into the presence of the Lord, and with them came the dark angel, the Lord said to the Adversary, “Whence dost thou come?” “From ranging the earth,” he answered, “and from going up and down in it.” The Lord said, “Hast thou observed my servant Job? There is none like him in the earth. He is whole-hearted and upright, fearing God, and shunning evil. He abides steadfast in his integrity, and thou movest me without cause to destroy him.” “Skin for skin!” replied the Adversary. “All that a man has he gives for his life. But do Thou stretch out Thy hand and touch him,

flesh and bone, and he will disown Thee to Thy face." Then the Lord said, "Into thy hand I give him, but spare his life."

So the Adversary afflicted him, from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head with a burning ulcer, and he sat in the ashes outside the gate like any poor leper. His wife said to him, "Thou dost still abide steadfast in thy integrity! Forsake God and die." But Job answered, "Thou talkest the folly of the heathen women. What! we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?"

This time also Job was blameless.

Three of Job's friends—the aged Eliphaz of Teman, and Bildad of Shuah, and the young man Zophar of Naama—came to comfort him, but when they saw him afar off they could not recognize him, and they wept aloud. When they came to him they rent their garments and strewed dust on their heads; and seven days and seven nights they sat on the ground and spoke never a word, for they saw that he was in very great anguish.

Then Job cursed the day on which he was born, wished that he had died an unconscious babe, and marvelled why life was given to men who longed for death, and who saw but darkness on the way they were compelled to go. Eliphaz of Teman said to him, "Thou hast often taught others, strengthened weak hands, upheld the falling, yet now when thou art touched, thou art dismayed. Was not thy fear of God thy support, and thy integrity thy hope? Whoever perished that was innocent, and where were the righteous cut off? Happy the man whom God chastens; He wounds but His hands make whole."

"Would God pervert right or reverse justice?" asked Bildad. "If thy sons sinned against Him, He delivered them to their sin. God does not cast away blameless men, neither will He take the ungodly by the hand. If thou art upright, He will fill thy mouth with laughing and thy lips with joy." "Truly," said

Job, "I know that it is so. But how shall a man be just before God? If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me; if I say I am blameless, He will prove me perverse. But blameless or perverse, it is all one—He destroys the innocent and the guilty."

"O that God would answer thee," said Zophar; "then thou wouldst see that He afflicts thee less than thy iniquity deserves. Turn thy heart to Him, withdraw from wickedness, and thou shalt forget thy sufferings; and thy darkness shall be turned into the light of the morning." "No doubt but you are the people that know, and wisdom will die with you! But I would speak to the Almighty, I would plead my cause before Him, for you justify Him with injustice and speak of His truth with falsehood. Though He slay me, yet will I trust in him, but I will maintain my ways before Him."

Answering again Eliphaz and Bildad, Job said, "Sorry comforters are you all with your windy words and head-shakings and mouth-pity. The shadow of death is on my eyelids, yet I have done no wrong, and my prayer was always pure. O earth, do not thou cover up my blood, nor let the cry of it cease! Behold, already my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high. For I know that my requiter is alive and that at the last He will arise upon the dust of the grave, and though this body is destroyed, yet without my flesh I shall see God. I shall see Him for myself. My own eyes shall behold Him, and not another's. My soul is burning with the desire of that day."

To Zophar Job said, "Why then do the wicked live, grow old, become mighty in power? Their race is established before their eyes, their house is safe from fear, the rod of God does not strike them. They send forth their little ones skipping like lambs; their children sport and play. They sing to the tambourine and the harp; they rejoice at the sound of the pipe. They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment they go down to the grave. Yet they said to God, 'Depart

from us, we would not know Thy ways.' How then! is it not well with them? Does it often happen that their lamp is put out; that destruction comes upon them? Or wilt thou say that God lays up the father's punishment for the children? See now, one man dies in the flower of his strength, and he was wholly at ease and in peace; another dies in the bitterness of his soul, and never a good thing did he enjoy; both lie down in the dust alike, and both shall the worms cover."

And remembering happy things, this too Job said in his anguish, "Oh, that I could be as in the moons that have waned, as in the days of God keeping me, when His lamp shone over my head and I walked by His light through the darkness; as I was in the days of my prime, when God was my counsellor watching over my tent, when the Almighty was still with me, and my children were around me!

"Did I go out into the city and prepare me a seat in the gate, young men withdrew shamefaced and grey-beards rose and remained standing. Princes broke off their talk, and laid hand to mouth. The ear that heard me called me blessed; the eye that saw me bore testimony; for I delivered the poor who was crying, and the fatherless who had no helper. The blessing of the destitute came upon me. The widow's heart I filled with singing. With justice I clothed myself; it was my raiment. Right-doing was my robe and turban. I was eyes to the blind, feet to the lame. I was father to the needy. I looked into the cause of the stranger. I broke the jaws of the unrighteous, I snatched the prey from his teeth.

"But now He has cast me into the mire; I am become like dust and ashes. Let God weigh me in fair balances, and He will know my integrity."

Those three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. Then was Elihu, the son of Barachel of Buz, angered against Job because he justified himself rather than God, and against his three friends because they condemned Job though

they could not answer him. While Elihu reasoned of God, who is past finding out and who is excellent in power and justice and all righteousness, a storm swept over the city—the sails of great clouds, the heavy rain of His splendour, and a rushing wind.

God spoke to Job out of the storm, “Who is this that darkeneth my purposes by words without knowledge? Wilt thou make void my justice, wilt thou condemn me that thou mayest be righteous?” Job said, “Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer Thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth.”

When God had spoken once again, Job said, “I know that Thou canst do everything, and that nothing can withstand Thy thoughts. I spoke indeed without knowledge of things too wonderful for me. I had heard of Thee by the ear, now my eye has seen Thee. Therefore I repent in dust and ashes.”

Then the Lord rebuked Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, and bade them go to Job with seven bullocks and seven rams for a burnt-offering. “And my servant Job will pray for you, and for his sake I will not deal with you according to your folly, for you spoke not rightly of me like Job my servant.”

The Lord lifted up the face of Job, and He doubled all that he had possessed before. He gave him also seven sons and three daughters. In all the land there were no women so fair as Job’s daughters; “Light of day,” “Cassia-sweet,” and “Eye-brightener,” he called them. Job lived after this one hundred years and forty and saw his sons’ sons and their grandchildren, four generations.

84. THE GREAT KINGS.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR died; and full twenty years passed away. And Belshazzar the king gave a great feast to a thousand of his princes. When he was fool-merry, he sent for the vessels of gold and silver which his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar had carried away

from the house of God in Jerusalem. They were crowned with wine, and as the king and his lords and their wives drank out of them, the minstrels and singing-folk, and dancing-boys and dancing-girls who clapped hands, glorified the gods of gold, silver, bronze, wood and stone.

In that very hour appeared the fingers of a hand, and the fingers were writing on the plaster of the wall opposite the great stand of lamps burning brightly. Belshazzar the king saw the fingers as they wrote, and his colour came and went; his mind was dismayed; his knees knocked together. He cried aloud for the astrologers and wise men of Babylon, but they stood dumb before the writing on the wall.

Then amid the dread and confusion came the queen-mother into the great hall and said, "May the king live for ever! There is in thy kingdom a man who has within him the spirit of the holy gods. In the days of thy grandfather there were found in him such lights and understanding, and a wisdom like the wisdom of the gods that Nebuchadnezzar made him master of the magicians and astrologers of Babylon. Send therefore for Daniel, whom the king called Belteshazzar, and he will show thee the interpretation of this wonder."

Then the king said to Daniel, "If thou canst read me this writing and make known the meaning of it, thou shalt go clad in scarlet, with a collar of gold about thy neck, and have the third place in the rule of the kingdom." "Keep thy gifts," Daniel answered, "and give thy rewards to another. None the less I will read the writing and declare its meaning. O king, the God over all gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom and majesty and glory; but when he grew proud of heart and reprobate, he was cast down from his seat and dwelt with the wild asses, until he knew that God over all ruled in the kingdom of men, and set over it whom He would. All this didst thou know, yet thou, Belshazzar his son, hast stood up against the Lord of heaven; thou and thy princes and thy women have

drunk wine in the vessels of His house; gods which see not and hear not and know not thou hast praised, but no glory hast thou given to the God in whose hand are thy breath and all thy ways. Therefore these fingers of a hand were sent; and this is the writing which has been written :

‘Counted, counted. Weighed. Divided.’

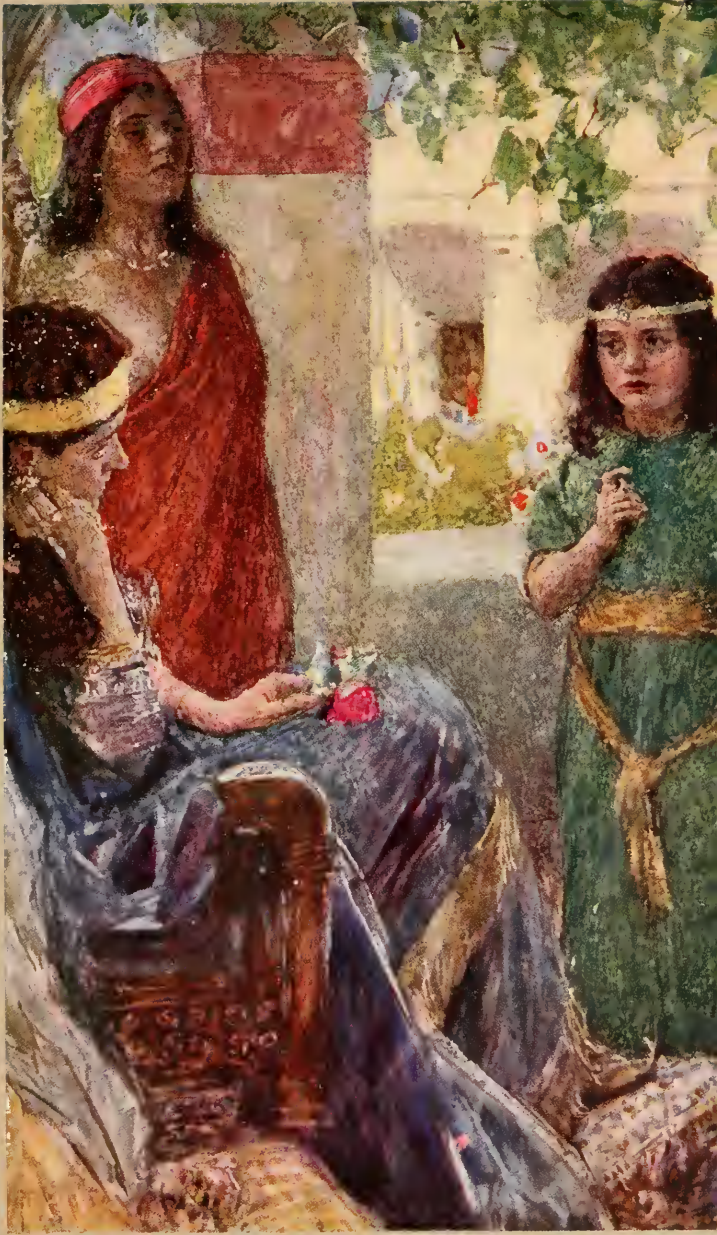
This is the interpretation : ‘Counted’—God has counted up thy kingdom, and finished it. ‘Weighed’—Thou art weighed in the balance, and art found light. ‘Divided’—Thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.”

Then was Daniel clad in scarlet, with a collar of gold about his neck, and the third place in the rule of the kingdom was given to him. But that very night Babylon the golden city fell, and Belshazzar the king was slain.

Now Cyrus was the great king, the king of the Medes and Persians, and he made Darius his shadow in Babylon; and Darius set over his provinces one hundred and twenty satraps, and over these he set three princes to whom they were accountable, so that the king should suffer no damage. Daniel was one of these three, but he excelled so greatly in wisdom that the king thought to give him charge of the whole kingdom.

So the princes and satraps plotted Daniel’s overthrow; but when they could find no fault to bring against him they persuaded king Darius to issue a decree that whoso, for the space of thirty days, made petitions to any god or to any man, save to the king alone, should be cast into the pit of lions. Wherefore the king sealed the decree, and it could not be recalled, for the law of the Medes and Persians made it unchangeable.

Though Daniel knew that the decree had been signed, he went into his house, and in his chamber, at



The Little Maid-servant of Naaman's W

the windows which opened towards Jerusalem he knelt three times daily, and prayed and thanked God as he was used to do. Then broke these men in upon him and found him praying, and they charged him before the king with defying the edict. Vexed and grieved was king Darius. His heart was set on saving Daniel, and he contended with his princes till the setting of the sun; but unmoved these men stood by the law, which no man could change.

The king yielded, he could do no other, but he said to Daniel, "Thy God, whom thou dost serve continually, may He deliver thee!" They took the aged seer—four score years he was and upward—and cast him into the pit of lions. Over the mouth of the pit they laid a stone and it was sealed with the rings of state so that no hand should move it.

That night king Darius fasted, there was no music in the palace, and sleep fled from his eyelids. He rose at the glimmer of dawn, and went in haste to the pit of lions. "Daniel," he cried with a lamentable voice, "Daniel, thou servant of the living God, has thy God been able to save thee from the lions?" "O king, live for ever!" Daniel answered; "My God has sent His angel and shut the mouths of the lions; they have done me no harm."

Right glad was king Darius. He bade them draw Daniel out of the pit of lions, but those plotters he cast down into it with their children and their wives. The ramping lions caught them as they were falling, and broke their bones to pieces. Then the king made a decree bidding men fear and tremble before the God of Daniel, "for He is the living God, and abides for ever and ever."

85. THE REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE.

IN the first year of his reign Cyrus the great king made a proclamation, "Jehovah the God of heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He has charged me to build Him a house at Jerusalem, which

is in Judah. Who is there of His people among you? His God be with him, and let him go up and build the house of the God of Israel."

Eagerly the Jewish princes and priests responded. Zerubbabel of the royal line of David was made governor; and there went forth with him out of captivity forty-two thousand, three hundred and sixty of the children of Israel, apart from servants and handmaids, seven thousand and more. Cyrus restored the vessels of gold and silver and the precious things of the temple, and the number of these was five thousand four hundred. From all about they received goodly gifts and free-will offerings. Joyfully they departed with their singing-men and singing-women; and with a mighty train of horses and mules and camels and asses, they came to their own cities in Judah and Israel.

In the seventh month the whole of the people assembled in Jerusalem. They set up again in its old place the altar of burnt-offerings, the great altar of unhewn stones and of bronze, and began to sacrifice to the Lord; and gathering palm-branches and the boughs of thickly leaved trees they held the ancient feast of green lodges.

Then, though they went in some fear of the heathen tribes around them, they had cedar-trees brought down in sea-rafts from Lebanon, and great stones squared by the masons, and in the second month of the second year they laid the foundations of another temple. The minstrels with harps and lutes, the singing-men, the Levites and priests in their fair raiment and with cymbals and trumpets in their hands, were joined by the people in the old song of praise :

" O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good—
For His pity endureth for ever."

The people shouted for joy, but the aged men who had seen the first house wept aloud, so that the sound of joy could scarce be told from the sound of weeping.

The people of Samaria offered to build the temple

with them; "We call upon your God as you do, and sacrifice to Him." These were the descendants of the heathen colonies from Assyria, which had added the "god of the land" to their beast-gods and images of iniquity. The Jews replied, "It is not for us to build with you a house to our God; we build alone"; and that refusal was the beginning of the lasting feud between Samaritan and Jew. For years these heathen folk harassed the inhabitants of Jerusalem, hindered the work, and brought it to a standstill at last.

Early in the reign of a second Darius the prophet Zechariah looked out in vision from the holy hill. He saw in the night a rider on a red horse; he was standing among the myrtle-trees in a shady place and behind him were horses red and bay and white. Zechariah said to the angel who talked with him, "O my lord, what are these?" "I will show thee," the angel answered. Then spoke the horseman among the myrtle-trees, "These are they that Jehovah has sent to go hither and thither in the earth." Then spoke the horses to the rider on the red horse (and he too was an angel), and they said, "Hither and thither have we gone in the earth; and lo! all the earth is at rest and still." The angel on the red horse said, "O Jehovah, how long wilt Thou have no pity on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, with which Thou hast been angry these seventy years?" Jehovah answered and said to the angel who talked with Zechariah, "With compassion I return to Jerusalem. My house there shall be built up again, and my cities shall have once more good things in abundance."

Then were the Jews mightily stirred up by Zechariah and Haggai the prophet. They turned with fresh heart to the building of the temple. The great polished stones were set in their courses, the beams of Lebanon laid in the walls; the work was going on fast when Tatnai the satrap of Syria came with the challenge, "Who commanded you to build this house?" "Cyrus the king of Babylon," the elders answered.

The whole matter was thereupon made known to this king Darius; the decree of Cyrus was found in the library of tile-books stamped with arrow-heads; and Darius sent his answer to Tatnai the satrap, "Leave the work of this house alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders build the house of God on its old site. Thereto, let the costs of it be paid promptly from the royal tribute; and see that there be no dearth of bullocks and rams and lambs for the priests to offer sacrifices of sweet savour to the God of heaven, and to pray for the life of the king and of his sons. Furthermore, if any one transgress this decree, pluck the timber from his house, set it up, and crucify him upon it."

So in the sixth year of Darius the king's reign, twenty years after the return from Babylon, in the month Adar, in the month of springing green and the latter rains, this second house was finished and dedicated to the Lord with many sacrifices and a sin-offering of twelve he-goats for all the tribes of Israel. And all the children of the captivity that were come again to Jerusalem held the passover, and kept the feast of unleavened bread with great joy, remembering Egypt.

86. ESTHER THE QUEEN.

THIRTY years and more passed away, and Ahasuerus, whom the Greeks called Xerxes, ruled from India to Ethiopia.

In the third year of his reign Ahasuerus gave a feast to great and small in the gardens of the palace at Shushan. Awnings of white, green and violet were hung by rings of silver from marble pillars; couches of gold and silver stood on a pavement of marble, alabaster and dark blue stone; and there was abundance of wine in gold vessels.

On the seventh day, when the king was merry, he sent for Vashti the queen to come in her royal crown that princes and people might gaze upon her beauty. Queen Vashti refused to come. Mightily angered was

Ahasuerus. He consulted his wise men as to what should be done with the queen, and they, fearing from her example a revolt of wives and much despite, advised that she should be deposed for ever. So it was done; and in all the provinces and all the languages it was decreed that every man should be master in his own house. Troops of fair young maidens were then brought from all parts of the kingdom, for Ahasuerus to choose another queen; and among them was Esther, a maiden of Shushan, beautiful of form and lovely of face.

In the household of the king there was a Jew named Mordecai, great-grandson of Kish, one of the captives carried away by Nebuchadnezzar; and he had brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, the daughter of his uncle Abihail; for her father and mother were dead. And when Esther was chosen with the other maidens and taken into the king's house, he charged her to say nothing of her kindred and her people; but every day Mordecai walked before the court of the women to see how Esther did and what should become of her. She won the hearts of all that looked upon her, and when in her turn she appeared before the king, Ahasuerus loved her above all women, and made her his queen instead of Vashti.

About this time Mordecai discovered a plot laid by two of the chamberlains against the king's life. He told Esther, who made it known to Ahasuerus in Mordecai's name. The charge was proved; the chamberlains were crucified; and the story was set down in the chronicles of the king.

After these things had gone by, king Ahasuerus raised Haman the Amalekite to great power, and set his seat above all the princes in Shushan; and all the servants in the king's gate bent the knee and prostrated themselves before Haman, for it was the king's command. Mordecai neither bent the knee nor bowed down, for he was a Jew. When the grand-vizier was told that Mordecai paid him no reverence, he was filled

with fury; but scorning to lay hand on Mordecai alone, he cast about to destroy the whole Jewish people in the kingdom of Ahasuerus.

He had lots cast to find a lucky day for his vengeance, and the lot fell on the thirteenth day of Adar. Then said Haman to the king, "There is scattered through the provinces of thy kingdom a people who keep themselves apart, have their own laws, and flout the mandates of the king. It is not to the king's profit to let this be. If it please the king, let him write a decree for their destruction, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the keepers of the king's treasury." Ahasuerus assented, and a decree under the seal royal was sent to all the lords, governors and satraps in the provinces to massacre the Jews, old and young, women and little children, on one and the same day, the thirteenth day of the month Adar. The decree was issued in Shushan, and while the king and his grand-vizier sat at the wine the city stood in dismay.

In every province there was mourning, wailing and fasting, and many lay down in sackcloth and ashes. Mordecai sent a message to Esther the queen, praying her to approach the king and save her people. Now it was death for any one to enter the presence of the king in the inner court unbidden, unless indeed the king held out his golden sceptre and suffered him to live; and for many days Ahasuerus had not called for Esther. Mordecai sent her word, "Never think to thyself that thou alone of all the Jews shalt escape because thou art in the king's house; for if thou art silent now, help and deliverance for the Jews will rise up from another place, and thou and all thy father's house shall perish. Who can tell if it was not for a time like this that thou art come to royalty?" Esther replied, "Go and gather together all the Jews in Shushan; let them fast for me, neither eating nor drinking, for three days and three nights; I also will fast with my maidens. And I will go in before the king unbidden; and if I perish, I perish."

On the third day, as the king sat on his throne over against the palace gate, Esther appeared before him in her royal apparel. At the glad sight of her Ahasuerus held out the golden sceptre, and Esther came and touched the end of it. "What wilt thou, queen Esther," said the king, "and what is thy desire? Were it the half of my kingdom, it shall be given thee." Esther prayed him to come that day with Haman to a banquet she had spread for them. As they sat over the wine the king again asked her to make known her desire. "What I desire," said the queen, "and what I ask, if I am pleasing in the king's eyes, is that the king shall come with Haman to a feast that I prepare to-morrow. Then I will declare my desire, as the king wishes."

With a proud and joyful heart the grand-vizier went out that day; but when he saw how Mordecai neither rose nor moved before him in the gate of the king, he was hot with rage. Yet he restrained himself and went to his house. There he boasted to his friends of the magnificence of his riches, of the number of his sons, of his favour with the king and queen; "And yet," he said, "all this to me is as nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting in the king's gate."

Zeresh his wife and all his friends said to him, "Have a gibbet made five and seventy feet high, and ask the king to-morrow to crucify Mordecai upon it. Then shalt thou go gleefully into the king's feast." Haman was pleased with this counsel, and had the gallows set up.

That night king Ahasuerus could not sleep, and he called for the tablets of the chronicles of the realm. They were read to him, and when it came to the place where it was written how Mordecai had discovered the plot of the two chamberlains against the king's life, Ahasuerus said, "What reward and greatness were bestowed on Mordecai for this?" He was told that nothing had been bestowed on him.

Afterwards the king said, "Who is in the court?" Now Haman was but just come into the court of the palace to have Mordecai crucified on the gallows he had set up. The king's servants said "Haman is standing in the court." "Let him enter," said the king. Then Ahasuerus said to the grand-vizier, "What is to be done for the man whom the king delights to honour?"

Haman thought to himself, "Whom does the king delight to honour but me?" and he said, "For the man whom the king delights to honour, let the king's robe be brought, and the king's charger with the crown royal on its head, and let one of the king's greatest princes put the robe on the man, and lead him on horseback through the city, crying, 'Thus shall it be done for the man whom the king delights to honour.'" "Go quickly," said Ahasuerus, "take the robe and the horse and do as thou hast said with Mordecai the Jew who sits at the king's gate."

After Mordecai had been thus honoured, he returned to his place at the king's gate; but Haman covered his head in chagrin, and hastened to his house. His wise men were foretelling evil days to come when the royal chamberlains summoned him to the banquet.

Then while they sat over the wine and fruits, Ahasuerus said to Esther, "What is thy petition, queen Esther?—it shall be granted—and what is thy desire?" "If I have found favour in the king's eyes," she said, "grant me my life; that is my petition; and save my people; that is my desire; for we are sold to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish." "Who and where is he that has thought to do this?" "The enemy," replied the queen, "the oppressor, is this wicked Haman."

Ahasuerus rose up in anger from the feast, and went out into the palace garden; but Haman was seized with terror. When the king returned, he saw Haman beside the queen's couch, pleading with outstretched hands for his life, and cried aloud "What! would he

lay hands upon the queen?" He had scarce spoken when the chamberlains seized the vizier and covered his face. One of the eunuchs said, "The gallows he made for Mordecai, who spoke for the king's safety, stands five and seventy feet high at Haman's house." "Gibbet him upon it!" said king Ahasuerus.

Since the decree for the massacre could not be recalled, letters under the seal royal were despatched through all the provinces by swift riders on horses and mules and dromedaries that the Jews should arm and stand for their lives against all who assailed them. Mordecai the Jew was made the first man in the kingdom after king Ahasuerus. He went forth in royal apparel of violet and white, with a band of gold about his brows, and a mantle of byssus and purple; and the Jews had light and gladness and joy and honour. The fourteenth day of the month Adar was for ever after made a day of joy and feasting; it was called the Feast of Purim, the feast of the Lots, because of the lots cast by Haman, son of Hammedatha of the house of Agag.

87. JERUSALEM RESTORED.

AHASUERUS died, and his son Artaxerxes was king. In the twentieth year of his reign—full seventy years after the dedication of the new temple—this strange scene befell.

In the stillness of the night a little company of men passed noiselessly among the ruins of Jerusalem, went out through the breach of the Valley Gate, and descended into the Valley of Hinnom. One rode, the others were on foot. The moonlight lay like snow. It sparkled on the princely attire of the rider, and on the mail and rich garb of his Persian escort. Black shadows were piled among the rocks of the hill-sides. The owls hooted; the jackals wailed on the fells. All along the valley, from the Dragon's Spring to the Pool of Siloam, the rider scanned the great gaps in the city walls. At the pool he could ride no further for the

heaps of fallen stones, and he went on foot along the brook Kedron and made the circuit of the city.

It was the new governor, the king's cup-bearer Nehemiah, whose prayer Artaxerxes had granted, that he should rebuild the wall and seek the welfare of the children of Israel. All attempts to fence the city had been prevented by the heathen folk around, but at the word of Nehemiah Jerusalem became an armed camp. Archers and mailed men guarded the workers; the builders were belted for war; the labourers had weapons in their hands. Watch was kept day and night. At last, on the fifty-second day, despite the jeers of the unbelievers and the dissuasions of the false prophets, the breaches were filled up, the gates hung, and all the walls made strong. The heathen, seeing these things, were much cast down, for they perceived that the work was wrought of God.

Then the people gathered together, and Ezra the holy scribe read the law to them, and as they listened to the law they wept with many memories. They held the autumn feast, fetched in branches of olive, myrtle and palm and made themselves green lodges; and all the seven days of the feast they hearkened to Ezra reading. Thereafter they came together fasting, clad in sackcloth, with earth strewn on their heads, confessed their iniquities, gave up marriage with heathen women, and renewed their covenant with the Lord.

Finally the dedication of the wall drew to Jerusalem a great multitude of priests, Levites, and nobles, and the singing-folk and minstrelsy of all the cities and villages of the land. The people thronged to the top of the western wall, and dividing into two processions they went by north and by south, with singing and sound of trumpets and clash of cymbals, and the delightfulness of flutes and harps, till they stood in the east before the temple, lifting up a mighty voice of thanksgiving.

Thus was Jerusalem dedicated to the Lord.

88. IN LONGING EXPECTATION.

IN these days the mouths of the prophets were silenced. God spoke no more by the wild seers who rebuked kings and threatened transgressors, or by the wise men whom He had illumined. But Ezra the scribe taught the people from the rolls of the scriptures. He brought back to them knowledge of the days and life of old, when Jehovah was continually in the midst of them. He had ever before him the promise delivered to Jeremiah, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. And I will put my law within them; I will write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

So the scribes filled the place left by the prophets; and from the written rolls of the scribes the voices of the dead prophets spoke, and were heeded more than when the prophets were alive. Most dear to the people were the words of God's steadfastness, and they wept when they heard or read them: "Can a woman forget her bosom child, that she should not have compassion on her little son? Yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee." "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore I have kept for thee my loving-kindness."

Ever more eagerly as the years passed away the people looked forward to the coming of the deliverer, so long promised, and promised the more clearly and confidently as each immediate expectation was disappointed. They longed for the child who should be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The Father everlasting, The Prince of Peace. They listened for a voice crying in the wilderness, "Prepare you the way of the Lord." Their eyes turned expectantly to the small white town on the hill, Beth-lehem Ephratah, for the Messiah, the anointed ruler in Israel. The words of Zechariah seemed spoken only yesterday, "Behold thy king cometh to thee. He is lowly, riding

on an ass. He shall speak peace to the nations, and his dominion shall be from sea to sea." The words of Malachi had scarce ceased sounding in their ears, "I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me. And suddenly the Lord whom you are seeking shall come into His temple. Behold, I will send Elijah the prophet before the coming of the day of the Lord, that great and dreadful day."

Then came to pass all the times foreshown in Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the image of empires. For the head of fine gold was his own kingdom of Babylon; the breast and arms of silver were the kingdom of Cyrus the Persian; the belly and thighs of brass the kingdom of Alexander of Macedon; the legs of iron and the feet of iron and clay the Roman empire in its strength and in its decline.

Long afterwards, in the Roman time, Herod, son of Antipater the Idumean, was raised to the throne of Judæa, through the influence of Mark Antony and the future emperor Augustus. His reign was a record of splendour splashed with blood. His noblest work was the rebuilding of the second temple of Jerusalem. But the worship of Jehovah or the worship of Jove was all one to him. In Samaria, which he rebuilt in honour of Augustus, the emperor was worshipped with heathen rites, and at Paneas, one of the sources of the Jordan, a white marble shrine placed the master of the Roman world in rivalry with Pan, the ancient earth-god. In the holy city the adherents of the law of Moses saw with horror how the people took to heathen customs, Olympic games, chariot-races, contests of poets and musicians on the stage, shows of wild beasts and displays of gladiators. Worst profanity of all, over the great gate of the temple the golden eagle of Rome desecrated the house of the Lord God.

Well might they long for the great stone detached without hands, for the drifted chaff of the summer threshing-floor, for the kingdom of God, and the Prince Messiah!

89. THE ARCHANGEL "MIGHT OF GOD."

IN the reign of king Herod there was a priest named Zacharias, and his wife's name was Elizabeth. They were devout souls, living in blameless obedience to all the commandments of the Lord. They had no children, and as they grew old, looking forward to the redemption of Israel, it was their sorrow that no son of theirs would be raised up as the promised deliverer.

Now it fell one day to the lot of Zacharias to burn the offering of incense in the early morning. The people came up to the temple, as they were accustomed, in the dusk before the dawn, and waited in the portico before the great curtain embroidered with imagery in the four colours of earth, air, fire and water. When the watchman signalled that light was breaking on the eastern hills, Zacharias entered the holy place, and the people stood outside in prayer.

Fire glowed on the golden altar and the lights burned brightly on the seven-branched lamp-stand. Zacharias strewed the incense on the fire, and as he did so, he saw an angel of the Lord standing by the right side of the altar. He shook with awe and dread, but the angel said to him, "Fear not, Zacharias; for thy prayer has been heard. Thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. He shall be thy joy and thy delight; and many shall rejoice that he was born. For he shall be great before the Lord. From a babe he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, and he shall go forth, as if he were Elijah born again, preparing for the Lord a willing people."

"By what sign shall I be sure of this?" said Zacharias. "I am old, and my wife is advanced in years." "But I am Gabriel," the angel answered; "I stand before God, and I have been sent to bring these glad tidings to thee. Since thou hast not believed my words, thy words are taken from thee till all that I have foretold shall have come to pass."

Now the people praying outside grew disquieted because Zacharias delayed so long in the awful presence of the Lord. When he came forth with a troubled face, and lifted up his hands to bless them but could utter no words, they knew that he had beheld a vision, and they wondered. But Zacharias remained speechless, and when the seven days of his ministration were ended, he departed to his home at Juttah in the Judean hills beyond Hebron.

This was in the summer-time. And it was in the seventh or sabbath year, when all the land rested untilled, and the fruit of field and vine and tree lay for the poor to gather and for the cattle and the wild creatures to eat. And after the early rains had fallen, and the sowers were sowing in mid-December, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a young maiden of Nazareth in Galilee.

Her name was Mary, and she was betrothed to Joseph, a carpenter, who was of the royal house of David. As she sat in the house and the new moon was gleaming at the end of the day, the angel spoke to her in the twilight, "Hail, maiden highly favoured! The Lord is with thee." Mary was startled by his words, and wondered to herself what the meaning of them might be; but the angel said, "Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favour with God. Behold, a son shall be born of thee, and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and the Lord God shall give him the throne of his father David, and of his kingdom there shall be no end." Mary said, "How shall this be?" and the angel answered, "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. Therefore shall the holy babe be called the Son of God. Thy kinswoman, too, Elizabeth expects a son; this is the sixth month; and she who was childless shall rejoice in her old age."

Then Mary said to the angel, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. As thou hast said, so be it done with me." And the angel left her.

In those days Mary arose and set out for the hill-country beyond Hebron. It was a long journey, but companies of travellers were always coming and going, and she did not travel alone. As she went by plain and valley and moorland track, she saw everywhere the great sowing, for after the sabbath year there was one thought in all the land, the sowing of the bread of life. She came to the house of Zacharias and entered. At the sound of her voice Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit; and clasping Mary in her arms, "Blessed art thou among women!" she cried, and "Oh my joy, that the mother of my Lord should come to me!" And Mary replied, singing for joy, "My soul glorifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, because He has looked upon the lowliness of His hand-maid; for behold, henceforth all generations shall call me blessed."

Mary stayed about three months with Elizabeth before she returned to her own home. When the grass was green again upon the fells, and iris and cyclamen and anemones spread over the rocky slopes, Elizabeth's little son was born. On the eighth day, when the neighbours and friends came to the feast at which the child was to receive his name, they were calling him Zacharias after his father, when Elizabeth said, "No, no; he shall be called John." Her kinsfolk were astonished, for none of her house had ever borne that name, and they made signs to Zacharias. But when they brought him tablets, the old priest wrote, "His name is John."

At that moment the power of speech was restored to him; and the spirit of prophecy came upon him, and he said, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who has come to His people for their deliverance, and called up a mighty saviour from the house of His servant David, even as He promised through the prophets of old; so that when we have been saved from the power of our enemies, we may serve Him in righteousness all our days. And thou, little child, shalt

be known for the prophet of the Most High, and shalt prepare His way before Him."

Awe fell upon those who heard him, and through all the hill-country of Judah these sayings were noised abroad. The people laid them up in their hearts and questioned among themselves, "In the time to come what shall this child be?"

The hand of Jehovah was with the child. He grew and became mighty in spirit. And he dwelt in the wild places of the hills, until the day when he appeared before Israel.

90. THE BABE OF BETHLEHEM.

Now it happened that Cæsar Augustus issued a decree at this time for a census of all the world. Every one was to be registered in the village or city to which he belonged; and Herod, who had trouble enough with his turbulent people, fixed the time of enrolment at the feast of tabernacles or green lodges, when harvest and vintage were over, and the weather was good for wayfaring, and great numbers were used to go up every year to Jerusalem.

So Joseph, who was of the house of David, went up with Mary his espoused wife to be enrolled at Bethlehem, the king's city. All the country was astir; distant voices singing, sounds of men and beasts, and trails of dust told of people journeying to their native places. It had fallen to evening as Joseph, leading the ass on which Mary rode, ascended the rise to Bethlehem. All the mountain-land about them was filled with light, for opposite to each other the setting sun and the full harvest moon were on the hills together, as though some wonder were about to happen in the world and the great lights of heaven had come out to see.

When they entered the city they could find no lodging; in the caravanserai there was no room for them, and every house already had its guests. A



The Voice of One crying in the Wilderness.

kindly townsman showed them a cave in the hill-side near the tower of David, where cattle were housed in the winter time. He brought them water and a faggot for fire, and in the rack there was straw. There they were glad to shelter, and there in the dead of the night Mary's babe was born, and she wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in the manger.

That night shepherds were keeping watch in the deep valley which sinks down east of Bethlehem. Their flocks were feeding in the moonlight fields in which Ruth had gleaned, and their fire was burning on the threshing-floor on which Boaz had slept among his sheaves. Suddenly the great angel stood by them, and the glory of Jehovah shone around them. They cried out with terror, but the angel said to them, "Be not afraid! I bring you good tidings of a great joy for all the people. A deliverer is born to you this day in the city of David. He is the Messiah, he is the Lord. This shall be a token for you—you shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger."

All at once the heavens seemed to open, and a multitude of the heavenly host were with the angel, and they said with innumerable voices, "Glory be to God in the highest heavens, and on earth peace among men in whom He is well pleased!" Then in a moment the angels were gone, and there was only the full moon shining. The shepherds coming to themselves, said, "Let us away! Why do we stand here? Let us to Bethlehem, and see this thing which the Lord has made known to us."

They hastened up to Bethlehem. They aroused the watchmen dozing at the gate. In the cave beside the tower of David they found Joseph and Mary. There in the ox's crib lay the new-born babe, clothed in his little woollen coat and swathed in soft bands.

The birth of the child and the words of the angel were spread abroad through the land, and ardent hopes were awakened in the minds of many that at last the day of deliverance was at hand. All these things Mary

treasured in her heart, and mused over them as she nursed her little son.

So it was that in the season of sowing the angel made known the coming of Him who was to be the living bread of the world; and at the feast of lodges the Word made flesh took up His abode among the tents of Israel.

Upon the eighth day the child was given the name of Jesus, "the saviour."

91. THE DIVINE CHILDHOOD.

IN those days there lived in Jerusalem a devout and aged man named Simeon, who looked forward to the coming of "the Consolation of Israel," and it had been revealed to him that he should not die until he had seen with his own eyes the Messiah who had been promised.

Now when the little child was brought to the temple to be presented to the Lord on the fortieth day after his birth, and his mother came to make her thank-offering of two turtle-doves, Simeon too was led by the Holy Spirit into the house of God. As soon as he beheld the child, he knew that the desire of his heart had been granted. He took the babe into his arms and praised God. "Now, O Lord," he cried, "Thou dost dismiss Thy servant like a watchman to his rest. I have seen, as Thou hast promised, the Salvation Thou hast prepared; I have seen him like a light upon the hills, a revelation to the nations of the earth, a glory to Israel Thy people." And gazing at Joseph and Mary, the old seer blessed them; and to Mary he said, "This child shall lead to the fall and to the rising again of many in Israel. Thy own soul also a sword shall pierce."

While he was still speaking an aged and holy woman, Anna the prophetess, entered the temple. She too gave thanks to God for the fulfilment of His ancient promise, and she spoke of the child to all in Jerusalem who were awaiting the deliverer.

It was not in the land of Israel alone that men at this time lived in a state of expectation. East and west, wherever the Hebrew people had wandered, and indeed far beyond their settlements, there had spread the belief that a new age was at hand, in which the misery and despair of the world would be retrieved by the miraculous birth of a divine child. The prophecies in which Isaiah had foretold him were echoed in Greece by the Oracle of Delphi. For many a year the Chaldæan astrologers had watched the skies for some starry sign of his coming. In Rome the emperor Augustus had dedicated an altar on the Capitoline "to the only-begotten Son of God," and it was common talk that out of Judæa should proceed one to whom the Fates had decreed the dominion of the earth.

Only a few weeks went by before certain princely men arrived with a great retinue in Jerusalem. They were Magi, searchers of the heavens, who had come out of the distant East inquiring for the child. "Where," they asked, "is the new-born king of the Jews? We saw the rising of his star in the East, and are come to worship him." The city was thrown into excitement by their questions, but no one could answer them; and king Herod, who was constantly beset by suspicions and fears, was strangely troubled when he heard of their seeking.

He sent for the chief priests and the scribes. "Tell me," he said; "what is your tradition? Where shall the Christ be born?" "In Bethlehem of Judah," they answered, and recited to him the words of the prophet Micah. Then the king had the Magi brought secretly to the palace and talked alone with them, and when he had questioned them of the star they had seen and the time of its appearance, he bade them go to Bethlehem. There assuredly the wondrous child had been born. "Search carefully," he said; "and when you have found him, I pray you bring me word that I also may go and worship him."

So the Magi departed. As they drew near to

Bethlehem, the star which they had seen in the East reappeared. They kissed their hands to it in joy. It moved before them until it came to the place where the little child was, and there it stood still. They entered the house, and beheld him in the arms of Mary his mother, and cast themselves down in homage before him. Then they brought forth from their treasures, and laid at his feet offerings of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Long afterwards when devout men pondered over the meaning of these gifts, they came to think that the gold signified tribute to a king; the incense, worship of a God; and the myrrh, the stupefying drink which was given in pity to those condemned to a death of agony.

The long journey of the Magi had not been fruitless. They had found the new-born king; they had beheld the wonder which the old star-gazers had long desired. But they did not return to Herod. Warned by God in a dream, they departed by another route into their own country, and their glittering train passed away into the Judæan hills and was seen no more.

Then an angel stood by Joseph in his sleep and said, "Up! and take the little child and his mother. Get thee into Egypt, and abide there until I tell thee, for Herod will search for the child that he may slay him." Joseph sprang up from sleep, and quickly saddled the ass for Mary and the babe. In the cold wind of the December night he led them southward over the moonlit fells. They travelled without harm by the way of the wilderness, and came to the land of the ancient bondage and the mighty deliverance.

When Herod discovered that the Magi had silently gone their way, he was beside himself with rage. In his dread lest the star should portend some danger to his throne he sent out armed men to kill all the children under two years of age in Bethlehem and the homesteads around. All that day the quiet hills resounded with the bitter weeping and the crying of women who would not be comforted, because their little ones were dead.

But after the savage king had himself died in agony and madness, the angel appeared once more in a dream to Joseph, and bade him return with Mary and the child to the land of Israel. Herod's cruel son Archelaus was now ruling in Judæa, but God guided them to Galilee. They came again to Nazareth, the beautiful little town among the hills of Zebulun, and they dwelt there among their own people.

The child thrived, and grew fair and strong. The grace of God rested upon him, and there was a wise and adorable sweetness in all he did and said.

Every year, when the storks had returned and the high fells were glorious with grass and wild flowers, his parents went up to Jerusalem for the feast of the passover. When he was twelve years old he too went with them in one of the great companies from Galilee, which passed through the lively land with joy-horns sounding. But after the days of the feast were over and they were returning home, the child Jesus remained in Jerusalem. At first neither Mary nor Joseph missed him; then, thinking he must be with playmates among their fellow-travellers, they went a day's journey. On reaching the halting-place for the night they sought for him among their kinsfolk and acquaintances. But no one had seen him.

Too anxious to think of food or rest, they at once turned their faces again to Jerusalem. The sound of merriment around the camp-fires died away behind them. As the day closed, the light of the full moon of the passover brightened, and showed the colour of every rock and stone on the rough track over the mountain moors. The night-wind blew chill, but they were too full of care to feel it. Silvery distances, disquieting and immeasurable, spread on all sides of them, but they did not shrink from the loneliness and fear of them. They were startled by the cry of beast and bird, and stood still for a moment to listen; then they went on again, fallen to silence, for nothing was now left them but heart-ache and prayer.

They sought for him in the busy courts and colonnade on the holy hill; they watched by the palace-gates and the tower of the Roman legionaries; they wandered with eager eyes through the crowded streets, and searched among the numberless tents of the pilgrims outside the city walls. It was not until the third day that they found him. In the midst of a wondering group he was sitting in the temple at the feet of the great teachers, hanging on their words and asking them strange questions. When they saw and heard him they too were amazed; but Mary said to him, "O child, why hast thou used us like this? Here were thy father and I seeking for thee in sorrow." But looking wistfully into her face, "Why were you seeking for me?" he said; "Did you not know that I must needs be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what it was he said to them. Then he laid his hand in Mary's, and went down from the temple with them to return to Nazareth; and there he was gentle and docile and did their will in all things. These too were among the memories which his mother kept in her heart.

There is no more to tell for many a day of the divine life hidden among the hills of Zebulun.

92. JOHN OF THE DESERT.

BUT well-nigh twenty years after this, in the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judæa, John the son of Zacharias came forth from the wilderness, calling upon men to repent, for the kingdom of God was at hand. Once again Israel was startled by the prophetic voice which had not been heard since the days of Malachi. From Jerusalem, from all the towns and villages of Judæa the people streamed out to listen to the man of the desert who came to them in the very likeness of the seers of old; for John, gaunt and burnt by the sun, was clothed in camel's hair, with a girdle of leather about his loins; his hair hung in wild locks, unshorn from childhood; he had never

tasted wine or strong drink; his food was the locusts of the sandy wadys and honey of the rocks and thickets of tamarisk.

They followed him down to Bethabara, "the house of the crossing," one of the fords over Jordan; and day after day he preached to them of forgiveness of sins, and a change of the whole heart, and the baptism of repentance. Caravans of merchants with their tasselled camels, soldiers of the Jewish garrisons, fisher-folk from the sea of Galilee, sheiks with their Arab tribesmen came to the ford, stayed to hear him, joined the publicans in asking, "O master, what shall we do then?" "And what shall *we* do?" and, confessing their sins, were baptized in the sacred river.

It was harvest-time in this tropical Jordan country. Sunbirds and kingfishers flitted over the waters, night-ingales sang in the thorny nubk bushes, silver-white cranes stalked in the stubble. Now and again the sound of an axe was heard as some old or barren tree was grubbed out of the soil. In the cool wind of the day the harvesters winnowed the corn on the threshing-floors.

Many Pharisees and Sadducees came with the multitudes for baptism. As John turned his flashing eyes upon them, "O brood of vipers," he said, "evil sons of evil fathers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Say not in your proud hearts, 'We are safe for we have Abraham for our father,' but bring forth fruits befitting repentance. Hark! how the axe is laid to the roots, and every worthless and dead tree is hewn down for the fire."

The people were excited by an ardent hope and expectation. They asked themselves, Was this the Christ or not? John read their thoughts and answered them. "I indeed baptize you with water," he said, "but there is coming one whose sandal-thong I am not worthy to loose—he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand; the wheat he will gather into his garner, but

the chaff he will burn in unquenchable flame"; and while he was speaking, the crowds could see the smoke rising from the fire of a threshing-floor.

Then from the high council at Jerusalem came priests and Levites to question him as to his mission and his authority. He told them clearly, "Nay, I am not the Christ." "What then, art thou Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Art thou the prophet promised of old?"* "No," he replied. "Who art thou then? Speak, that we may answer those who sent us." He answered them in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord."

And from Nazareth Jesus came also, and was baptized in Jordan. As he came up from the water the heavens opened; the Spirit of God descended upon him like a dove, and a voice from heaven was heard saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

93. JESUS AND THE TEMPTER.

THEN the Spirit of God hurried him away into the wilderness. From the fruitful oasis of the river he ascended into the savage mountains, where the sun burnt like fire by day and at night shudders of icy wind swept down from the snow-fields of Hermon. He found among the limestone rocks some cave to shelter him from the extremes of heat and cold; and there he fasted for forty days and forty nights.

As his human strength ebbed away, he learned in those appalling solitudes the distress and dismay with which loneliness invades the hearts of men. The eerie sound of sand and rocks cooling, the delusive half-lights which distort vision, the strange phosphorescences of lifeless things, the sudden stirrings, movements, rumours of the night troubled even his spirit with a breathless sense of danger. During that prolonged fast the

* Deut. xviii. 15.

crescent moon waxed into a great brightness which lay like snow jagged with black shadows, waned away into a gleaming rim which gave place to a greenish darkness swarming with stars, and appeared once more as a slender sickle of silver. So many days, so many nights he endured in prayer; and time seemed to be swooning into eternity.

Yet he was not wholly alone in his solitude. Dim forms stole silently among the rocks, and gathered in a shadowy throng at the entrance of his cave. He heard them breathing; he caught gleams of the light in their eyes. Of these apparitions he did not speak afterwards, but it may well have been that of the speechless creatures of the ancient covenant these were drawn to him by some obscure instinct, and that, pitying the pain in which all flesh travailed, he opened his arms in love and blessing to these living things which he had made. We cannot tell; it is not written; but we know that he was with the wild beasts.

In the hunger and feebleness of these days the Evil One assailed him with temptations. "Art thou not God's Son?" he said; "Bid then these stones become bread." But Jesus answered him, "It is written, Not by bread only shall man live, but by every word from the mouth of God." Then the Evil One bore him away into the holy city, and placed him on a pinnacle of the temple, high above the busy streets and the deep valley of the Kedron. "If thou art the Son of God," he said, "fling thyself down; for it is written,

'He hath given His angels charge
To keep thee in all thy ways;
In their hands they shall bear thee up,
Lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.'

"It is also written," Jesus said, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Yet again, he took him up into one of the heights of the world, and showed him in one flashing vision the kingdoms of the earth. "All these," he said, "will I give thee, and the power of

them and the glory, if thou wilt bow down and worship me." Jesus answered, "Get thee from my sight, Satan! for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him alone shalt thou serve."

And the Tempter, baffled and abashed, left him for that time, and angels came and ministered to his wants.

94. THE FIRST DISCIPLES.

THEN Jesus descended from the mountains, and came again to Bethabara. The day of atonement was drawing near, when Azazel the scape-goat, bearing the sins of Israel, was led into the wilderness.

As Jesus went by, many of the multitude turned to gaze after him, for though he was merely clad in white head-dress and coloured raiment, he was of the tall and bright-haired race of David and from his person there streamed a sense of power and beauty which laid a spell upon the minds of men. When John saw him approaching, he exclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes upon him the sins of the world. This is he of whom I said, There is one coming. I knew him not then, but now I bear witness that he is the Son of God."

And the next day as John, with two of his disciples, beheld Jesus passing, "Look!" he said, "the Lamb of God." Hearing his words, the disciples left John and followed Jesus, who turning and seeing them, said, "What are you seeking?" "Rabbi," they replied, "where art thou staying?" "Come, and I will show you," he answered; and Jesus led the way among the trees to a shelter of woven boughs. It was the fourth hour after noon, and they remained with him.

These two were young fishermen from the sea of Galilee; one was Andrew from Bethsaida, the other was John who came to be the disciple Jesus loved most. After this the first that Andrew met was his brother. "O Simon," he said, "we have found the Messiah, the Christ"; and brought him at once to Jesus. Jesus

looked into his good and fearless eyes and said, "Thou art Simon son of Jona, but thou shalt be called Peter, the man of rock."

On the morrow Jesus, whose thoughts were now turned to Galilee, encountered Philip, who also came from Bethsaida. "Follow me," he said, and Philip gladly yielded to his bidding. So these four from the inland sea accompanied Jesus and were the first of his disciples.

Northward they fared along the road of the ever green Jordan valley, and somewhere during that journey the eyes of Jesus were illumined and he saw in the spirit a man musing under a fig-tree far away, and in his hand was a scroll which told of Jacob's vision at Bethel. While Jesus looked there came upon the man some startling experience of the soul which he never forgot, but which no pen has recorded.

It was at one of the resting-places on the route that Philip came upon Nathanael of Cana in Galilee. "O son of Tolmai," said Philip eagerly, "we have found him of whom Moses wrote in the law and the prophets spoke—Jesus of Nazareth, son of Joseph." "Christ shall come out of Bethlehem." Nathanael replied, "Can any good thing come to us out of Nazareth?" "Come and see," said Philip.

Now when Jesus saw Nathanael coming towards him, "Behold in truth," he said, "a son of Israel in whom there is no deceit." Nathanael heard his words and said, "How dost thou come to know me?" "Before Philip called thee," Jesus answered, "when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee." "Rabbi," exclaimed Nathanael, "thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel." Jesus replied, "Because I said I saw thee under the fig-tree, thou believest. Greater things than these shalt thou see. Indeed, indeed, thou shalt from this time behold the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

Three days afterwards there was a marriage in

Cana. The mother of Jesus was there, and Jesus and his disciples too were invited. At the fall of night the bride was brought home with lights and minstrelsy, and blithely the guests sat down to feasting and merriment; but before the days of festivity were ended, the women were in dismay lest the house should be put to shame. Mary in her anxiety whispered to her son, "They have no wine left." "O woman," Jesus said gently, "what wouldst thou have of me? My time is not yet come." His mother only raised her eyes to his for a moment, and then said to the servants, "Do whatever he may tell you."

There were in the house seven great jars of stone, which held the water used for ablutions after the Jewish fashion. Jesus said "Fill the water-jars with water"; and when the servants had filled them to the brim from the fountain, "Now draw some," he said, "and take it to the ruler of the feast." The ruler of the feast tasted the water changed into wine; not knowing whence it came (but the servants who drew the water knew well), he said gaily to the bridegroom, "People bring out their good wine first, and then what is not so good when the guests have drunk freely, but thou hast kept the best of the wine until now."

This was the first of the wonders Jesus wrought. It revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.

95. THE TRAFFIC IN THE TEMPLE.

Now once more the land had broken into flower and song; the roads were smoking with the dust of pilgrims, for the passover was nigh; and Jesus too with his disciples went up to Jerusalem.

From the high ground above Beth-el they caught sight of the holy hill lifting to the sun its masses of white marble banded with gold; but when Jesus entered the precincts of the temple he found the palm-shadowed courts and enclosures turned into a deafening market. Merchants were driving a brisk trade in the

sale of oxen, sheep, doves and pigeons for sacrifice; money-changers were busy at their counters; the noises of cattle and sheep, the crying of lambs, the cooing of the numberless birds in their cages mingled with the clamour of the traders, the bargaining of the pilgrims and the jesting of the crowd.

The heart of Jesus was hot with anger against the people and the greed of the priests who suffered this profanation. Making a scourge of cords, he began to drive out both buyers and sellers with their sheep and cattle. He overturned the seats of the pigeon-dealers and the tables of the money-changers, whose coin he scattered over the pavement. "Clear all this away!" he cried. "My house, it is written, is the house of prayer; you have made it a den of thieves."

Day by day while the feast lasted Jesus was in the temple, proclaiming the kingdom of God, and healing the lame and the blind and all that came to him in sorrow and suffering, so that among the multitude who saw the wonders which he wrought very many believed in him. Then as the day closed in, he would leave the city with his disciples and take his rest in their tent on the wooded hill-side over Kedron, but for the most part he would spend the night in prayer in the shelter of the olive-trees.

On one of these moonlight nights there came to him a rich man named Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jewish people. "Rabbi," he said, "we know thou art a teacher come from God, for no one can do such miracles as thou dost unless God be with him." Jesus received him graciously, and as they talked together in secret of the kingdom of God, Jesus said to him, "Indeed, indeed I tell thee, if a man be not born again he cannot see the kingdom." Nicodemus gazed at him in bewilderment and answered, "How is a man, when he is old, to become a babe and be born once more?" "Yet, indeed, it is so," said Jesus. "If he be not born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom. That which is flesh is born of the

flesh, but the spirit is born of the Spirit"; and as a draught of air ruffled the olive leaves, "The Spirit," he said, "and the wind blow as they will. Thou hearest the sound of the wind, but thou dost not know whence it comes nor whither it goes. So it is whenever a man is born of the Spirit, the breath of God." "How can these things be?" said Nicodemus. "What!" Jesus replied, "thou art a teacher of Israel, and dost not know these things?"

Then in the quiet of the night he taught him.

After the days of the passover were gone by, Jesus departed from Jerusalem into the country of Judæa, and sojourned in the towns and villages, preaching the reign of God; and his disciples baptized all those who believed in him. But when the followers of John heard of this, they were jealous for the fame of their master, and came complaining to him at the springs of Ænon, "He that was with thee, rabbi, beyond Jordan—and to whom thou didst bear witness—he also is now baptizing, and all the people crowd after him." But John answered, "How should it be otherwise? Did you not hear me say, 'I am not the Christ, but I am sent before him'? A man can receive nothing, unless it be given him from heaven. I am but as the star in the dawn, and dwindle away in his light."

It was not long after this that Herod seized John and cast him into prison; for like the prophets of old who flamed out in the face of kings, John had rebuked him for his evil deeds and above all for marrying Herodias, his brother's wife. Herodias hated John and would fain have slain him; but Herod stood in awe of him, for he knew him to be a just and holy man, and though he kept him in chains, he was eager to hear his words, and did many things at his bidding.

96. AT THE WELL IN SAMARIA.

BUT when Jesus heard that it was said among the Pharisees, "Jesus is baptizing more that believe in him than John," he left Judæa and returned into Galilee.

His way lay through Samaria, and he came to the city of Sychar in the vale between the blue cliffs of Ebal and the white dome of Gerizim. It was holy ground and haunted. There in the days of old Jehovah appeared to Abram in the shadow of the terebinths. Those were the fields Jacob bought and gave as a heritage to Joseph. Ebal had answered Gerizim, proclaiming the curses and the blessings of the law. Here stood the stone of testimony that Israel had put away the gods worshipped beyond the river. On that spot the body of Joseph had been laid in the earth.

Not far from the city was Jacob's well; and Jesus, wearied with his journey, sat down on the border of the well to rest. It was about noon, and his disciples had gone into the city to buy food.

Then there came to draw water a woman in the bright-coloured dress of the Samaritans, and Jesus spoke to her and said, "Give me to drink." She turned to him in surprise; "How is it," she said, "that thou, who art a Jew, askest for a drink from a woman of Samaria?" For with the Samaritans the Jews have no dealings. Jesus answered, "If thou didst know in what manner God gives, and who it is that asks thee for a drink, thou wouldst have asked a drink of him; and he would have given thee living water."

"But, lord," said the woman, "thou hast nought to draw with, and this well is deep. Whence then wouldst thou take that living water?" Then, with a quick look into his face, "Art thou," she said, "some one greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this well, and himself drank of it, and his sons also and his flocks?"

"When a man has drunk of this water," Jesus

replied, "he thirsts again; but let him drink of the water which I shall give him, he will never again thirst; and in him that water will be a fountain springing into life without end." "Lord," said the woman, "give me then of that water, that I may not thirst or need come any more to draw." "Go and bring thy husband," Jesus said, "and come back hither."

"I have no husband," the woman answered. "Thou hast spoken truly," Jesus replied; "for thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou hast now is not thy husband";—so easy and so frequent was divorce among that half-heathen people of many races and many gods. "Lord," said the woman in a low voice, "I see that thou art a prophet."

Jesus spoke to her of many things, and once the woman answered, "On this mountain it was that our fathers worshipped, but the Jews say that where we ought to worship is in Jerusalem." "O woman," he said, "believe me; the time is nigh when it will be neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem that you will adore the Father. You adore you know not what; the God we worship we know, for redemption comes from the Jews. But the time draws nigh—it is here already—when true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth."

"I know that the Messiah is to come," said the woman; "when he is with us he will tell us all things."

"He is speaking to you," said Jesus; "I am he."

At that moment his disciples returned. They stood amazed that he, a rabbi, should be seen in converse with a woman; but reverence closed their lips, and they asked him no questions. As for the woman, leaving her water-jar, she ran back into the city. "Oh, come," she cried to the people she met, "come and see a man who has told me all that I have ever done. Is not this perhaps the Christ?" And the people went eagerly out of the city with her to see this new prophet.

Meanwhile the disciples pressed about Jesus, saying, "Eat, rabbi"; but he answered them gently, "I



John, looking upon Jesus as He walked, said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!"

have food to eat that you do not know of." "Has some one brought him food?" they asked one another. "My food," he went on, "is to do the will of Him who sent me—to finish His work."

The woman's story induced many of the Samaritans to have faith in Jesus, and they besought him to enter their city and abide with them. He stayed there two days, and when they had listened to his words very many more believed. "It is not because of what thou hast told us," they said to the woman; "now we ourselves have heard him, and we know that he is the saviour of the world."

97. THE UNBELIEVERS OF NAZARETH.

THEN Jesus departed from that friendly city and those storied fields; and when they came into Galilee he bade his disciples return again for a little while to their ships and nets on the sea-shore. He himself remained, proclaiming the good tidings of the kingdom, and teaching in the synagogues, for the Galileans who had been at the feast of the passover had spread his fame through all the region. Through the wood-side hamlets he went, and the towns on the hills, and the villages, fenced with cactus-hedges, which emerged on their knolls like islands from the immeasurable harvest whitening on the plain of Esdraclon, and so came once more to Cana.

And a certain officer of the king, who had heard that Jesus was in Galilee, came and besought him to go down to Capernaum, where his son was lying at death's door. But Jesus said, "Unless you see signs and wonders, you do not believe." "Lord," the officer of the king answered, "come down before my little son dies." "Go thy way," Jesus said to him, "thy boy is full of life."

The officer asked no more, but took his answer, glad and undoubting. His servants met him on his way with news of the lad's recovery. "Yesterday, an

hour after noon, the fever left him"; and the father knew it was at that hour that Jesus had promised him the safety of his child.

Then Jesus came to Nazareth, his own home.

It was the feast of the gathered harvest, when people lived out of doors in lodges of green boughs. All the field work was done with for many a day, for the year that was to follow was that seventh or sabbath year when all the land lay at rest under the four winds; and peace fell like the dew of heaven on the hearts of Israel, for the debtor was acquitted of what he owed, and the slave was set free from thralldom, and the law was read aloud, so that all the people, men and women and children, and the stranger within their gates, might learn, and fear the Lord God.

On the sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as his custom was, and stood up to read the scripture for the day. The roll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to him, and he found the place in which it says—

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.
For the Lord hath anointed me to bring good tidings to
the poor.
He hath sent me to bind up the broken of heart,
To announce freedom to the imprisoned,
And light to the eyes of the blinded;
To proclaim the year of the Lord’s graciousness——”

he stopped abruptly; and rolling up the parchment, he gave it back to the clerk, and sat down to speak.

Every face in the synagogue was turned to him in one fixed gaze as he began: “This day is fulfilled the passage of scripture which you have heard.”

The spell of his gracious words fell upon them; but as they caught his meaning, they listened amazed and incredulous. “Is not this,” they asked in scorn, “the son of Joseph?”

“Doubtless,” Jesus went on, “you will quote to me the saying, ‘Physician, heal thyself’—work not thy wonders at Capernaum and the ends of the earth, but here in thy own country. Alas! in his own

country no prophet is honoured. In the days of Elijah—when for three years and six months the heavens were sealed—many were the widows in Israel. To none of them was Elijah sent, but only to the widow of Sarepta, in the land of Sidon. In the days of Elisha the prophet, many were the lepers in Israel. Of them there was not one cleansed, but only Naaman, the Syrian.” The mercies, the signs, the wonders were not reserved to the children of Abraham.

His words stung them to fury. They sprang to their feet; they drove him out of the synagogue—out of the city. They closed in around him, and brought him to the sheer brow of the hill which overhung Nazareth. They seized him to cast him headlong.

Jesus raised his head, and turned his serene eyes upon them. Suddenly the fierce clamour was stopped in their open mouths. Their savage hands ceased to hold him. Their distorted faces shrank back. An awe, which in an instant might change to terror, fell upon them.

Then, as though he did not see them at all, slowly and silently Jesus passed through the midst of them, and was gone upon his way.

98. THE CIRCUIT OF THE SEA.

So Jesus departed from his own country. In Nazareth he never dwelt again.

From a western summit a solitary figure looked down on the sea of Galilee. The mountains of Bashan, the mountains of Naphtali framed the sea with weathered cliffs, whose colours changed from hour to hour. The blue water was thronged with restless sails; the brilliant heavens above it glittered with innumerable wings. The winding shore was one long highway of cities, havens, villages: cities of granite, white marble, black basalt; great houses embowered on wooded ascents; villages with wheat-fields, noble walnut-trees, palms and thickets of oleander dipping into the waves.

Sea and shore swarmed and hummed with many industries and endless traffic; the toil of potters, dyers, tanners, of boat-builders, net-makers, fish-curers, of husbandmen, shepherds and fruit-growers, and the stir and noise of camel-trains coming and going.

The Roman road went down to Capernaum and the fruitful plain of Gennesareth stretching along the shore. It was the way of the merchants from Sidon, Tyre and Ptolomais to the league-long hateful splendour of Tiberias, newly built upon dead men's bones, and to the blithe Greek cities of the Decapolis.

Yon glimmer of white in the south-eastern hills comes from the stone tiers of the Greek amphitheatre of Gadara. Right across the sea, on the edge of the plateau of Bashan, Greek Hippos is piled in the clear air. Hark! a trumpet-call rings out on the mountains, reverberates among the cliffs, and dies away on the blue waters. There is some stir in the camp of the legion above Hippos. Far beneath, the caravan route, which has followed the eastern shore, strikes off through the wady of Gamala, "Camel-hump town."

A wonderful busy world, which mirrored in little the life, character and colour of the great world of strange races and many languages, was crowded into the circuit of the sea of "Galilee of the nations."

Jesus went down into Capernaum, and there he made his home. From that time onward he ceased not to proclaim the kingdom of God, and to call men to repentance. So this sabbath year began—the year of the earth at rest, the year of the wild creatures free to take as they willed, the year of the poor, the debtor and the slave, the "year of the Lord's graciousness."

99. THE WONDROUS HEALER.

IN the early morning as Jesus was on the beach and the people thronged around him to hear the word of God, he saw two ships by the shore, and the fisher-folk had landed and were washing their nets in

the sea. He went up into one of the ships. It was Simon's; and calling Simon to him, he asked him to shove off a little way from the land. Then he sat down in the ship in the morning light, and taught the multitude on the shore.

When he had done speaking, he turned to Simon and said, "Push out into deep water, and shoot the nets for a haul." "All this night, master," said Simon, "it has been labour lost; but since thou hast said it, I will cast again."

Scarce had the nets been shot when a shimmering whiteness ruffled the sea, the ship heaved on a long swell, and so mighty a shoal swept into the nets that they began to break. Simon's men shouted and beckoned to their fellows; James and John, his partners, hastened alongside; and both ships were filled with fish from the straining nets until they were well-nigh sinking.

Then suddenly the surprise and joy of that wondrous sight were changed into a great fear of the majestic form which sat and watched them. Simon Peter threw himself down at the knees of Jesus and said, "Depart from me, Lord; I am a sinful man." But Jesus answered him, "Be not afraid; from this day thou shalt be a fisher of men."

And when they were come again to land, Simon and James and John left ships, and fish, and all, and followed him.

As Jesus was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum on the sabbath day, there leaped up with a shrill cry a man possessed by an unclean spirit: "Eya! who set thee to meddle with us, Jesus the Nazarene? Art thou come to destroy us? I know who thou art; the holy one of God!"

Jesus answered in a menaceful voice, "Be dumb; and come forth from him!"

Shaking the man from head to foot, the demon came out of him with a shriek, but did no harm. And the people, shuddering and astounded, said to each

other, "How is this? What is this new teaching? Even the unclean spirits he commands with the voice of lordship, and they obey him."

Leaving the synagogue, he went into the house of Simon and Andrew. The mother of Simon's wife lay stricken with a raging fever; and after a little while, when they had told him, Jesus came to her. Taking her by the hand, he raised her up; and lo! the fever was gone; she was strong and well; and she began to wait upon them.

That day when the sun was setting and the sabbath was ended, all those who had any sick or afflicted with devils brought them to him. The dusk fell, and still they came by torch-light and the glow of the waning moon. He laid his hands upon every one of them, and healed them. And the evil spirits, as he cast them out, cried aloud, "Thou art the Son of God," but he silenced them, for they knew that he was the Christ, and from them he would have no glory.

Long before day, while it was still dark, he stole away through the silent streets, and came in the star-light to a lonely place. There he prayed until it was morning. Simon and the others went seeking him; and when they had found him they said, "All the people are looking for thee. They will not suffer thee to leave them." Jesus said, "Let us go to the other cities. There too must I needs declare the kingdom of God, for that is why I am come."

So, day after day all over the hills of Galilee he journeyed, preaching in the synagogues and doing works of infinite compassion.

There came a leper, white as snow, and knelt at the feet of Jesus. "If thou but wishest," he said, "thou canst make me clean." "I do wish," said Jesus, moved with pity; "be clean." He touched him, and all his flesh was made new and innocent as a child's. Jesus said to him, "Speak not of this, but show thyself to the priest, and make for thy healing,

and for a testimony of it, the offering which Moses commanded." But the man, when he had gone his way, could not for joy refrain from speaking, and great multitudes came to hear Jesus and to be healed by him. Then Jesus hid himself in the wilderness that he might pray.

After many days he returned to Capernaum. And when it was noised abroad that he was come, all the city crowded to the house, so that there was no room within—no, nor even about the door. But in the inner court where he was teaching, Pharisees and writers of the law, from Jerusalem and the towns of Judæa and Galilee, sat watching every look and word.

Now, while Jesus spoke, people were bringing to him a man lying paralysed on a couch of matting; but when the bearers saw there was no way into the house they carried him by the outer stairway to the flat roof, and breaking away the tiles of the parapet, they let him down to the feet of Jesus. And Jesus, seeing their faith, said to the sick man, "Take heart, son; thy sins are forgiven."

The scribes and Pharisees answered him in their hearts, "This is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Jesus read their hearts in their malign eyes. "Why do you murmur evil in your thoughts?" he asked. "Is it harder then to say to this sick man, 'Thy sins are forgiven,' than to say, 'Arise and walk'? Learn then from this that the Son of man has on earth power to forgive sins"—and turning to the sick man, "Arise," he said, "take up thy couch, and go thy way home."

Instantly the man paralysed rose to his feet, and went out under the eyes of them all, glorifying God. They stood in amazement—"Never have we seen the like of these strange things!"

Then, upon a day, as he went down to the shore of the sea, he passed along the great road where the

merchantmen paid tax and toll. Matthew the son of Alpheus was sitting at the receipt of customs, and Jesus paused, and fixing on him his gracious eyes, "Follow me," he said. And Matthew rose, and left all to become his disciple.

100. THE HOUSE OF PITY.

THE weeks and the months went by. The early rain fell, and the latter rain. There was no ploughing, no sowing, no toil in vineyard or olive-garth; but now over all the hills was the joy of the grass, and Esdraelon was waist-deep in flowers. It was the feast of the passover, and Jesus had gone up to Jerusalem.

Now in the city, near the sheep-gate, there was a pool called Bethesda, "the house of pity"; for around it was an arcade of five porches, wherein lay many sick and blind and lame and paralysed who awaited the bubbling of the water. At a certain season an angel, it was said, descended into the pool, troubling the water, and the first who then went down into it was healed, whatsoever his malady.

Among them was a man who had suffered for eight and thirty years. When Jesus saw him lying there and was told that he had been ill so long, he said to him, "Dost thou wish to be made well?" "Lord," the poor man answered, "little comes of my wishing. I have no one to lay me in the pool after the moving of the water. While I am limping thither another has got down before me." "Rise up," Jesus said, "take thy bed, and walk."

Straightway the man was cured; and taking up his bed, he departed. But it was the sabbath, and the Jews rebuked him, "Thou must not carry a bed, it is the Lord's day." "He who healed me," the man answered, "bade me take up the bed and go." "Who was it dared say that to thee?" But the man could not tell them, for Jesus had disappeared in the crowd that was beside the pool.

Afterwards Jesus met the man in the temple. "See now," he said to him, "thou art well again. Sin no more lest something worse befall thee."

The man went his way, joyfully making known that it was Jesus who had restored him. And the Jews were inflamed against Jesus, and would fain have slain him for doing these things on the sabbath day.

Afterwards Jesus went out through the summer land; and on a sabbath day as they passed through the corn, his disciples plucked the ears and rubbed them in their hands to eat, for they were hungry. Some of the Pharisees saw it and said to him, "Look how thy disciples break the law of the sabbath!"

Jesus answered them, "Have you not read how when David and his men were hungry, he went into the house of God and they ate the shew-bread, which only the priests may eat? Had you known the meaning of those words, 'I will have pity, not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath."

Upon another sabbath day he went into the synagogue and was teaching. A man was there whose right hand was shrivelled, and the scribes and Pharisees were watching whether he would heal him on the sabbath. Jesus, knowing their crafty purpose, said to the man, "Come and stand so that all may see thee"; then turning to the Pharisees, "Answer me this," he said; "Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath day—or to think evil; to save life—or plot to destroy it? And among *you*, who is there that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a ditch on the sabbath, will not lay hold of it and pull it out? How much more is not a man worth than a sheep!"

There was dead silence, and Jesus looked all round upon them with indignant eyes. Then he said to the man, "Stretch out thy hand." He stretched out the hand that was shrivelled; it was as sound as the other hand.

The Pharisees, mad with hate, took counsel with the

faction of king Herod to destroy him; but for all their malice multitudes followed him, people from the shores of Sidon and Tyre, from the barren hills and oases of Idumæa, from the uplands beyond Jordan, from the region of the Greek Decapolis where men's thoughts were set on art and letters and the joy of life.

101. SAYINGS ON THE MOUNTAIN.

ABOUT this time Jesus went up into the Mountain of the Two Horns, and all through the summer night he was praying to God. When it was day he bade his disciples come to him, and he chose from among them twelve who should be always with him and whom he might send out to preach, with power to heal diseases and to cast out spirits of darkness. And the twelve, whom he called apostles, were these—

Simon Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James—"Boanerges," he named them, "sons of thunder"; Philip, and Bartholomew (and this was Nathanael); Matthew the customs officer, and Thomas; James the son of Alpheus, Judas surnamed Thaddeus the son of James, Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

Jesus descended the mountain with them, hearing the murmur of many voices below him, and seeing the land drop down in bright slopes of grass and flowers into the white mist on the lake of Tiberias. A turn in the rugged track brought him into view of the multitude. They were awaiting him in the old crater between the mighty horns of cliff. Then sitting on a stone among the mint and spice plants, Jesus began to speak to them.

"Blessed," he said, "are the humble-hearted, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

"Blessed are the sorrowful, for they shall be consoled.

“Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.

“Blessed are they who are hungry and athirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.

“Blessed are the compassionate, for they shall receive compassion.

“Blessed are the pure-hearted, for they shall see God.

“Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called God’s children.

“Blessed are they who shall suffer persecution for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed shall you be when you are reviled and molested and falsely charged because of me; great is your reward in the heavens. Even so, indeed, did they persecute the prophets before you.”

These also were among his sayings in that green hollow of the ancient fire-mountain :

“Do not believe that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I came not to destroy, but to fulfil and complete them.”

“You have heard how it was said to the men of old, ‘Thou shalt not kill; whoso kills shall be tried by the judges.’ To you I say whoever shall be wroth with his brother shall answer to the judges. When then thou dost bring thy gift to the altar, if it comes to thy mind that thy brother is aggrieved against thee, leave thy gift before the altar, and go at once and be reconciled to thy brother. Then come and make thy offering.”

“Also you have heard how it was said of old, ‘Thou shalt not forswear thyself’; but I say, Do not swear at all; not ‘by heaven,’ because it is God’s throne; not ‘by earth,’ because it is His footstool; nor ‘by Jerusalem,’ because it is the city of the Great King; nor yet ‘by my head,’ because thou canst not make one hair white or black. Let your word be ‘Yes, yes,’ ‘No, no’; more than this comes of the Evil One.”

“Again, you have heard the saying, ‘Thou shalt

love thy neighbour and thou shalt hate thy enemy. But I say, Love your enemies, and pray for them who injure you; so shall you be the children of your Father who is in the heavens. For He gives His sun to rise on the wicked and the good, and His rain to fall on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those loving you, what merit do you look to have? Why, the tax-gatherers themselves do this. And if you have a greeting for your brethren only, is that uncommon? The pagans do the same. Be you then perfect, as your heavenly Father is."

"Take heed not to do kind things so that the eyes of men may notice you; otherwise no reward shall you have from your Father in the heavens. When thou givest thy alms, sound not the trumpet before thee, as the actors do, in the streets and synagogues, that they may catch the admiration of men. But let not thy left hand know what thy right hand is doing. Thy Father, who sees into hidden things, will repay thee."

"When thou prayest, let it not be in the fashion of the actors, who love to pray standing up in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that people may see them. But go into thy chamber, shut the door, and pray there in secret to thy Father; and thy Father who sees in secret will reward thee. And when you pray, pray not with vain repetitions, like the pagans who think to be heard for much clamour. Your Father knows your need before you ask. In this manner then you should pray:

"Our Father which art in heaven,

"Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

"Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

"Be not over-anxious for your life—what you shall eat; nor for your body—what you shall put on. Is not life a more wondrous gift than the meat of life, and the body than the clothing of it?"

“See these birds of the air!—they do not sow, neither do they reap; they do not store up in barns; your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth more than they?”

“And these lilies of the fells—think how they grow! They neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you that even Solomon in all his glory was not robed like one of these. If God then so clothes the grass, which lives to-day and will be thrown to the oven to-morrow, will He not much the more clothe you, men of little faith? Be not then over-anxious about to-morrow; let to-morrow be anxious for itself. Enough for the day is its own trouble.”

“Ask, and you shall have; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened. Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone; or a snake if he asks for a fish? But if you, evil as you are, know how to give good things to your children, how much rather will your Father in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him?”

“Whoever hears these words of mine, and puts them in practice, will be like a wise man who has built his house on the rock. The rain has come down, the streams are in flood, the winds beat against that house; it has not fallen, for it was founded on the rock. But he who hears my words, and does not put them in practice, is like a fool who built his house on the sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, the winds blew and beat upon that house. It fell, all in ruin.”

When he had finished, the people marvelled to hear him. For he taught as one with authority; not like the scribes—“Rabbi Jannai saith,” “Rabbi Joses said,” but “In very truth *I* say.”

102. “ART THOU HE?”

WHEN Jesus descended from the mountain and entered Capernaum, there came to him a centurion, who, for all he was a Roman, was friendly to the Jews

and had built them a synagogue. "Lord," he said, "a good servant of mine lies in great suffering, stricken with paralysis." "I will come and heal him," Jesus answered. "Lord," said the centurion, "I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof; say only a word, and my servant shall be cured. Though I too am under orders, I have command of soldiers; and when I say to one 'Go' he goes, and to another 'Come' he comes, and to my servant 'Do this' and it is done."

When Jesus heard this he was astonished. "In very truth," he said to those who followed him, "even in Israel I have not found such faith as this. And many, I tell you, shall come from the east and from the west, and sit with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast forth into the darkness without, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

"Go thy way," he said, turning to the centurion, "even as thou hast believed, so let it be with thee."

In that very hour the centurion's servant was healed.

In these days Jesus went beyond Tabor with many of his disciples to the city of Nain, and a great crowd went with him. At evening the light of the setting sun reddened the rock-cut tombs on the hill-side; and as they drew near the city they heard the wailing of flutes and the lamentation of mourners.

A dead man was carried out of the gate, and much people of the city followed after.

Jesus looked at the woman who went alone, weeping before the dead; he saw that she was a widow. He looked at the face of the young man lying on the bier, and he knew that he was her only son. He looked at her again; his heart was full, and he said to her, "Do not weep so."

He went to the bier and touched it with his hand. The bearers stood still. Jesus said, "Young man, I

say to thee, Arise.” The dead sat up, and began speaking.

Jesus restored him to his mother.

To John imprisoned in Machærus on the Dead Sea cliffs his own disciples brought the story of these things.

And John, pining for the winds of the waste, impatient for Israel’s deliverance and Messiah’s triumph in Jerusalem (yonder its white tops glimmered high beyond the sea) sent two of his disciples to Jesus with the message, “Art thou he who is to come, or must we look for another?”

Jesus, who was healing the sick and casting out the spirits of darkness, paused to answer them, “Return to John, and tell him what your eyes have beheld and your ears have heard! The blind are seeing, the lame are walking, the lepers are clean, the deaf do hear, the dead are risen, the good tidings are proclaimed to the poor. And happy is he to whom I am not a stone of stumbling.”

When the messengers had gone away, Jesus spoke of John to the multitude. “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swaying in the wind? Then what was it you went out to see? A man clothed in rich garments? Such are found in the houses of kings. But what then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, and much more than a prophet; for this is he of whom it was written of old,

‘Behold, I send my messenger before thy face
To prepare thy way before thee.’

If you will but understand, this is Elijah that was to come.”

Then, thinking still of that voice in the wilderness who fared on locusts and wild honey, Jesus said, “To what shall I liken the men of this generation? They resemble the little children sitting in the market-place and calling to their playmates, ‘We piped to you for

wedding-guests, and you would not dance; we keened to you for a funeral, and you would not be mourners.' John came, who neither ate bread nor drank wine; and you say, 'He has a devil.' The Son of man came, eating and drinking; and you say, 'He is a glutton and a carouser, hail-fellow with tax-gatherers and loose-livers.'"

One of the Pharisees besought Jesus to dine with him. Jesus went to the Pharisee's house; and slipping off his sandals, he reclined with the guests at table. There was a sinful woman in that city, and when she heard that Jesus was dining in the house of the Pharisee, she brought an alabaster vase of perfume, and coming behind the couch of Jesus, stood beside his feet. She was weeping; soon his feet were wet with her tears, and she was drying them with her hair, and kissing and anointing them with the perfume.

In his heart, then, said Simon the Pharisee, "If this man were a prophet, he would know the kind of woman it is who is touching him."

Jesus, breaking silence, answered his thought, "Simon, I have a thing I would put to thee." "Speak, teacher," said Simon.

"A certain money-lender had two debtors. One owed him five hundred shillings, the other fifty. As they had nothing they could pay, he forgave them each his debt. Which of them will love him the more?" "He, I take it," Simon answered, "to whom he forgave the more." "Rightly judged," Jesus replied.

Then, turning to the woman, he said to Simon, "Dost thou see this woman? I came to thee, a guest. No water didst thou give me for my feet: this woman washed my feet with her tears, and dried them with her hair. No kiss of welcome didst thou give me: since I came in this woman has not stopped kissing my feet. On my head no perfume hast thou shed: this woman has poured fragrance on my feet. Therefore I tell thee her great sinfulness is forgiven, seeing she has loved



Christ and the Woman of Samaria.

greatly. But he to whom little has been forgiven, little is his love."

To the woman he said, "Thy sins are forgiven." ("Who is this that is forgiving sins too?" the guests were murmuring around the table.) "Thy faith has redeemed thee; go into thy peace!"

103. THE SENDING OF THE TWELVE.

AFTERWARDS Jesus passed from city to city and from village to village. The twelve were with him, and there were also thankful women delivered from ailments and wicked spirits—Mary of Magdala (out of whom were cast seven demons of sickness), Joanna the wife of Chuza, king Herod's intendant, Susanna and others, who served him out of their abundance.

So all the summer of the restful land was spent; and once again, after the early rain, labour began, and the seed was flying in silvery casts as the seedsmen paced on Gennesareth plain. And Jesus, teaching now by the sea, sat in a ship because of the multitudes, and spoke to them in parables.

"A sower," he said, "went out sowing. Some of the seed fell along the beaten way; it was trodden underfoot and the birds of the air devoured it. Some fell on stony ground; when it sprang up it withered in the sun, because it had no moisture. Some fell among thorns; the thorns grew with it and stifled it. Some fell into good soil; when it came up, its yield was thirty-fold and sixty-fold and a hundred-fold."

Many such parables he told, and explained them afterwards to his disciples. As to the story of the sower, "The seed," he said, "is the word of God. Those along the way are they who hear the word, but the Evil One comes and snatches it out of their hearts lest they should believe and be saved. Those on the stony ground are they who accept the word with joy; but they have no root, they believe for a time and fall away in temptation. That which fell among thorns,

they are those who hear the word, but let it be stifled by the cares and the riches and pleasures of the world. The seed that fell into good soil, those are they who, hearing the word in their good honest hearts, keep it and yield fruit in constancy."

Another parable he told them: how a man sowed good seed in his field, but when all the world was asleep an enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and when the corn was in ear there too were the rank tares flaunting blue and yellow. "Sir," said his servants, "shall we weed out the tares?" "Not so," he answered, "lest you pluck up the wheat with them. Leave both till the harvest, and I will say to the harvesters, First root out the tares, and bind them in sheaves to burn, but get the wheat together into my barn."

When his disciples said to him, "Tell us about this parable of the tares," Jesus made it all clear to them. "He who is sowing the good seed," he said, "is the Son of man. The field is the world; the good seed is the children of the kingdom; the tares are the children of the Evil One; the enemy who sowed them is the Devil; the harvest is the end of the world; the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are plucked out and cast into the fire, so shall it be at the end of the world."

And again he said to them, "The kingdom of heaven is like a pearl of great price for which, when the merchant in quest of fine pearls discovers it, he sells all he has that he may own it."

Once, when evening was come and Jesus was outworn, he said to his disciples, "Let us cross to the other shore." Taking him with them, then and there they pushed off from the multitudes on the beach and from the little ships around them.

And as they sailed Jesus fell into deep slumber under the high stern, with his head on the steersman's cushion. A sudden squall swept down on the lake;

the light on the hills was quenched in gloom; the green seas broke over the ship so that they were in danger of going down. They awoke Jesus with wild cries, "Lord! Rabbi! Master, master! save us; we are perishing."

Jesus arose, and bade the squall be silent and the raging sea be still. The wind dropped and the sea fell to a calm. "O men of little faith," he said to his disciples, "why are you so full of fear?" But they, who had seen so many wonders, gazed at each other and whispered, "Who then is this that commands winds and waters, and the winds and waters obey him?"

They came to land in the evening glow. It was in the country of the Gergesenes. Above the shore were many tombs cut in the rocks; and as Jesus came up from the ship there met him out of the tombs a man possessed by an unclean spirit.

He was naked; and he was neither to hold nor to bind, no, not even with chains, for he snapped the ropes about his feet and burst the chains asunder. He did not dwell in any house, but made his abode in the tombs. Always, night and day, he was in the tombs and on the mountains, shrieking and gashing himself with flint stones, so that folk were scared to go that way.

When he saw Jesus he ran to him and fell at his feet, crying out, "What have we to do with thee, Jesus Son of the Most High God?"—for Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of him—"We beseech thee in God's name, do not torture us."

Jesus said to him, "What art thou called?" The distraught soul, who had heard the trumpets and seen the iron warriors of Rome, answered him with burning eyes, "Legion I am called, for we are many." Then the spirits entreated him not to cast them out into the abyss; "Suffer us to enter into the swine yonder." On a grassy plateau which dropped sharply into the sea a great herd was feeding. Jesus gave the spirits leave.

The legion entered into the swine; the whole herd of two thousand leaped up in terror, and rushing down the steep, perished in the waters.

The swineherds fled to Gergesa, and all the city and the farmsteads came out to know what had happened. They found the man of the tombs sitting in peace, and clothed, and in his right mind. They heard all that was to tell, and gazing on Jesus in dread, they besought him to depart from their shores.

Jesus returned to the ship. Fain would the man of the tombs have gone with him whithersoever he went, but Jesus said, "Get thee home to thy friends, and tell them what great things God has done for thee."

So, with thankful heart, the man spread through the land of the Greek cities the story of his deliverance.

At Capernaum Jesus found the people awaiting him. As they gave him a glad welcome, a ruler of the synagogue, named Jairus, came and fell at his feet, pleading with him, "My little daughter lies dying; but come and lay thy hands upon her, and she shall live."

She was his only daughter—about twelve years old.

They were making their way through the crowds which thronged upon them, when messengers came to the ruler and said, "Thy daughter is dead; why trouble the master any further?" But Jesus overheard and said to Jairus, "Be not afraid; only believe."

Jesus entered the house. There were the flute-players and the women keening. "Cease lamenting," he said; "the maiden is not dead, but asleep." And they laughed him to scorn. When he had silenced the noise and put the people out, he went in to the maiden with her father and her mother, and Peter and James and John, his disciples.

He took her hand in his, and spoke to her: "Talitha, koumi," which is, "Little girl, arise." Her spirit came back to her, and at once she opened her eyes and arose to her feet; and Jesus bade them give her food.

And now Jesus sent out the twelve to proclaim the kingdom of heaven to the lost sheep of Israel. Power he gave them to heal the sick, to raise the dead, to cleanse lepers, to cast out spirits of evil. "You have received of free gift," he said, "give freely." He bade them go shod in sandals, taking with them neither gold nor silver nor bronze in their girdles, nor staff, nor wallet, nor bread, nor yet two tunics. "He that receives you," he said, "receives me, and he that receives me receives Him that sent me"; "but if they will not receive you, depart and shake the dust from your feet in testimony against them." And he forewarned them of dangers, betrayals, sufferings. "Be therefore wise as serpents and guileless as doves. And when charges are brought against you, be not anxious how you shall answer. It will not be you who speak, but the Spirit of God shall speak in you. And fear not them who kill the body but the soul they cannot kill."

104. THE VENGEANCE OF HERODIAS.

THE rumour of these events reached the ears of king Herod, and bewilderment and an eerie misgiving took hold upon him; for while some said, "It is Elijah returned from heaven," and others, "It is one of the old prophets who has arisen from the dead," "It is John," said the king; "I took off his head, and now he has come out of his grave."

For but a little while ago, when the cuckoo had begun calling in the glens and the flamingos were stalking again by the Salt Sea, Herod made a great birthday supper at Machærus for his lords and high captains and the leading men of Galilee. The daughter of queen Herodias came into the hall and danced before them in her wanton beauty. In that moment of delight the king said to her, "What shall I give thee?" and added with an oath, "Ask what thou wilt; were it half my kingdom, it shall be thine."

She went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask?" "The head of John the Baptist," said the queen. She ran back into the hall and said to Herod, "I would have from thee, this very moment, the head of John the Baptist on a salver."

Sorry at heart was the king, yet because of his oath and of his high guests, he could not bring himself to slight her. Immediately he gave his orders. One of the guards beheaded John in his prison and brought his head on a salver. He gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother.

When John's disciples heard of it, they came and took the body, and laid it in a tomb. Then they went and told Jesus.

So it came about that Herod was bewildered by the rumours that reached him. "John was slain; if he be not risen from his grave, who is this that does these works of power?" And he was long anxious to see Jesus.

105. LEST THEY SHOULD CROWN HIM.

WHEN the twelve returned to him, Jesus took them across the lake that they might rest a little while in solitude; but the people, hearing of his departure, followed by the shore, forded Jordan, and came over the green plain below Bethsaida to his place among the wild hills. He was moved at the sight of the great crowds; they were like sheep without a shepherd. His heart went out to them, and he taught them and healed their sick.

As it drew to evening the disciples, looking down on the plain with its homesteads, terebinths and palm-trees sprinkled among the corn, said to Jesus, "It grows late in the day. The multitude have nothing to eat; let them depart that they may get bread in the thorps and farms."

"Why need they depart?" Jesus asked; "do you give them to eat." "Shall we go then," answered

some of the twelve, "and buy two hundred shillings' worth of bread for them?" Jesus said, "How many loaves have you? Go and see." Then came Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, and said, "Here is a lad who has five barley loaves and two small fishes—but what is that among so many?" Jesus only said, "Bid the people sit down."

Now the place was deep in grass and wild flowers, for it was the early summer-time, and the people sat down wondering and surmising. Jesus took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven he blessed God, and divided them; and as he gave and still gave them to the disciples, they distributed them, going and coming again and again until all that great gathering—about five thousand men, besides women and children—had eaten and were satisfied, and twelve baskets were filled with the fragments that were left.

Then a splendid hope, a passionate certainty, stirred the hearts and shone in the eyes of the multitude. Fretting under the yoke of Rome and half-Roman kings, ever on the edge of revolt, wildly expectant of the Messiah, they cried aloud to each other, "Truly this is the Prophet that is to come, the Deliverer, the Christ of God." Watching their excited faces, Jesus saw how like it was that they would take him by force and make him king. At once he compelled his disciples to embark and cast off for Capernaum; sent away the too-vehement crowds, and withdrew alone into the peace of the rocky heights.

The light failed, darkness fell, the wind rose; and still he prayed on the mountain top. In the fourth hour of the night he saw, far below, the ship on the lake and the disciples toiling at the oars, for wind and wave were against them. Then in the dark before dawn he went to them, walking on the white water. He was passing the ship when they saw him and cried out in terror, for they thought it was a spirit of the

sea. Immediately he spoke to them, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid!"

"If it be thou, Lord," Peter called to him, "bid me come to thee upon the water." Jesus said, "Come." Peter got out of the ship; but when he saw the white race of the sea and felt the great wind blowing about him, his heart misgave him, and "Lord, save me!" he cried as he began to sink.

Jesus stretched out his hand and caught hold of him. "Little-faith!" he said, "why wast thou of two minds?"

They both came up into the ship; the wind ceased; and all in a moment the ship was at the land where they would be.

106. "HAPPY THOU, SIMON BARJONA."

DISQUIETED by the excitement of the people, Jesus departed to the pagan coasts of the west. Wistfully he gazed into the shining distances of the Great Sea, and watched the tall ships of Tyre and Sidon going down the blue ways to lands that would one day be his. But even here he was not unknown.

A Greek woman came and fell at his feet saying, "Take pity on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly tormented by a demon." Jesus said to her, "Let the little ones of the house first be fed. It is not well to take the children's bread and give it to the little dogs." "True, Lord," she answered; "yet the little dogs under the table do eat the morsels the children let fall." "O woman," Jesus said, "for those words of thine go thy way; the demon is gone out of thy daughter."

And so it was.

Then Jesus journeyed across the sun-burnt levels of Esdraelon, and through the country of the ten Greek cities, and came to the lake-side. There he gave hearing and speech to a man who was deaf and dumb; and

he fed another multitude who had followed him for three days and had now but seven loaves of bread; and coming to Bethsaida, he touched a blind man's eyes and the blind man saw—yet very dimly, for men were as though they were trees walking, but when Jesus touched them a second time all was bright and clear to him.

From Bethsaida northward he fared beyond Merom Waters. Hermon lifted high above him only glittering patches and ragged streaks of snow, for it was autumn and near the feast time of the green lodges.

As he came near the villages that lay out before Philip's city Cæsarea, Jesus said to the twelve, “Who do men say that I am?” “Some,” they answered, “John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” “But you—” he said, “who do you say?” Simon Peter answered, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Jesus said to him, “Happy thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood did not reveal that to thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I say to thee, Peter thou art and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

Then he charged his disciples to say to no one that he was the Christ. And from that time he began to tell them how he must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and how he would rise again on the third day.

Thus they came to Philip's city, which aforetime had been called Paneas. For there was a steep cliff of white stone weather-stained with red, and in the cliff a great cavern, sacred to Pan and the Nymphs. From beneath the threshold of the cavern Jordan had rolled out his waters for ages; and for ages before men

had heard of Pan they had worshipped here the Baalim of the fountains of the underworld. On the summit of the cliff Herod the murderer of the children had raised a temple of white marble to the lord of the kingdoms of the earth and of the glory of them—Augustus Cæsar.

107. THE TRANSFIGURATION.

TAKING with him Peter and James and John, Jesus ascended at evening into the high places of Hermon. The sun went down, and the glow of the harvest moon brightened upon the mountain. And Jesus, going a little way apart from the disciples, knelt down to pray.

As he prayed, all his aspect changed; his face shone like the sun; his raiment became white, glistening. And the disciples were aware, as a man is aware in a dream, that two lordly men were with him, and that these were Moses and Elijah in glory; and that they were talking with him of his faring forth from the world, which was to be fulfilled at Jerusalem.

Peter and the two with him, heavy with sleep, awoke and beheld the splendour of his aspect; and as the mighty figures of the law-giver and the prophet were parting from him, Peter said, "Master, it is good that we be here. Let us make three lodges of boughs, one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elijah"; but he knew not what he was saying.

He was still speaking when a shining cloud covered Jesus and those two holy ones; and as the disciples saw them enter the cloud, they were struck with fear. Then a voice came out of the cloud and said, "This is my beloved Son; give ear to him."

The voice ceased, and they saw Jesus standing in the moonlight, alone.

In those days they said no word to any man of that vision on the mountain.

108. LITTLE CHILDREN AND THEIR ANGELS.

As Jesus returned home through Galilee with the twelve, he spoke to them of the days that were drawing nigh. "The Son of man," he said, "will be betrayed into the hands of his enemies; they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise again." But his words only bewildered them, and they were afraid to question him.

When they reached Capernaum and were in the house, "What was it," he said; "that you were arguing together on the way?" They all were silent, for indeed they had been disputing which of them was greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus, who read their thoughts, called a little child and placed him by his side in the midst of them.

"Unless your hearts be changed," he said, "and you become as little children, you shall not even enter into the kingdom of heaven. Therefore shall he that makes himself lowly like this child be first in the kingdom of heaven." And when he had taken the child in his arms, he said, "Whoever receives in my name a little child like this, receives me; but whoever shall cause one of these who believe in me to stumble—better it were for him that a millstone were hung about his neck and he were cast into the deep sea."

This also he said of children, "Have a care how you despise any one of these little souls; for this I tell you, that in heaven their angels see continually the face of my Father who is in heaven." Women would bring to him even their babes—the "worrier" and the "toddler," and the "fat one"; and when the disciples once grew impatient and reproved those who brought them, Jesus was much displeased and said, "Suffer the little children to come to me, and forbid them not; for the kingdom of God is of such. He who will not receive the kingdom of God with the trust and readiness of a little child shall not enter into it." And he would take the children, each one of them, in his arms, and fondle their heads, and bless them.

As they conversed, Peter asked him, "How often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" "Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "Up to seventy times seven times. And for that reason it is that the kingdom of heaven is likened to a man—a king—who made a reckoning with his servants. One who was brought to him owed him thousands, and as he had nothing wherewith to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, with his wife, children, all he had, and payment made. The servant fell at his feet, pleading, 'Be patient with me, lord, and I will pay thee all.' The king was moved, and he freed him and forgave him the debt.

"Then the servant, when he had left the king's presence, met one of his fellow-servants who owed him a hundred shillings; and he seized him by the throat, crying, 'Pay me what thou owest me.' The man fell at his feet and said, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay thee all.' But the servant refused and cast the man into prison. When the other servants saw what he had done, they indignantly told all to the king; and the king rose in wrath and delivered that wicked servant to the tormentors until all his debt was paid. So," said Jesus, "shall my heavenly Father deal with you; if you do not each forgive his brother with all his heart."

Now as the caravans went up from the hill-country to the feast of lodges, ardent hopes and expectations of the Deliverer were the talk of many at the noontide rest and beside the evening fire of the wayfarers. The brothers of Jesus came to him and said, "Get thee on thy way into Judæa, so that thy followers may see thy works of wonder. They who would stand in the eye of men do nothing hidden. If thou dost these things, show thyself to the world"; for his brothers did not believe in him. But Jesus said, "Go you up to this feast. My time has not come. I do not go

yet." Still after they had set out he too departed, but it was as it were in secret.

His way was through Samaria. At one of the villages where he thought to abide for the night they would not receive him, deeming him a pilgrim travelling to Jerusalem. When James and John knew of this, they said to him, "Lord, is it thy will that we bring down fire from heaven and consume them, as Elijah did?" Jesus turned to them more in pity than in anger; "You know not of what spirit you are. For the Son of man is come, not to destroy the lives of men, but to save them." Then they went to another village.

As they journeyed there was a man who said to him, "Lord, I will follow thee, wherever thou goest." Jesus replied, "Foxes have their earths, and the birds of heaven their nests, but the Son of man has not where to rest his head."

To another he said, "Follow me," and this other answered, "First let me go and bury my father." Jesus said, "Leave the dead to bury their dead; but thou, who art living, go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

Yet another said, "Lord, I will follow thee, but let me go and bid them farewell at home." Jesus answered, "He who puts his hand to the plough, and looks back, is not fit for the kingdom of God."

109. JESUS AT THE FEAST.

MEANWHILE at Jerusalem amid the vast crowds a close watch was kept by the Jewish rulers for the signs of any movement against their authority. They sought for Jesus in vain, but among the multitude his miracles and his teaching were talked of in cautious undertones. Some believed him to be a good man, others called him a misleader of the people; none spoke openly for fear of the rulers.

At last Jesus appeared. He entered the temple and proclaimed the kingdom of God. Some of the

citizens were astonished. "Is not this," they asked, "the man they seek to kill? He speaks as he pleases, yet no one says a word. Do the rulers now see that he is indeed the Christ?" Those who believed in him, and they were many, said among themselves, "When the Christ comes, will he work more wonders than this man has done?"

Disquieted by what they heard, the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to lay hands on him. They returned without him; "Never," they said, "did any man speak like this man." "Have you too been seduced?" cried the Pharisees; "Do any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believe in him? But this rabble, who know nothing of the law, are men accursed." "The law?" replied Nicodemus (he who came to Jesus at night, himself a ruler). "Does our law judge any man before it hears his defence and knows the evidence against him?" "What!" they retorted, "art thou also a Galilean? Search the scriptures and learn that out of Galilee comes no prophet." And they flung off angrily, each to his own house.

In the moonlight of the early morning Jesus came in from the Mount of Olives, and after the sacrifice of incense the people—some with palm-branches, and some with citrons in their hands—gathered about him in the temple, and he sat down and taught them. But the scribes and Pharisees brought a sinful woman, and charging her before him, "Teacher," they said, "by the law of Moses she should be stoned to death; but what sayest thou?"

Their question was meant to ensnare him; but Jesus, stooping down, was tracing outlines with his finger in the dust, as one who paid no heed to them. Then as they continued to press him, he raised his head and answered, "Let him among you who is sinless cast the first stone"; and he stooped down again, and continued his tracing.

One by one, from the oldest to the youngest, they

went their way, conscience-stricken. Then Jesus rose up, and the woman was standing alone. He said to her, "Where are they, thy accusers? Did no one condemn thee?" "No one, Lord," she answered. "And I do not condemn thee either," he said. "Go thy way, and sin no more."

Now every day of the feast water was brought from the pool of Siloam in a silver ewer, and poured out at the morning sacrifice, and the people waved palm-branches; and at dusk the great lamps in the court, lit in memory of the pillar of fire, glittered over the city, and men danced a torch-dance to minstrelsy and song. Jesus, reminding the throng of these things, cried aloud, "If any man thirst, let him come to me, and drink"; and again, "I am the light of the world; he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

Everywhere and always, when he was teaching, the scribes and Pharisees sought to entrap him in his speech. To those who believed in him he said, "If you remain steadfast in my word, then indeed you are my disciples. You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." "We are Abraham's seed," the scribes broke in, "and were never yet in bondage to any man." Jesus answered them, "Whoever gives himself up to sin is the slave of sin. If you were the children of Abraham, you would do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill me because I have told you the truth. That did not Abraham do."

Then when he said, "Truly, I tell you, if a man abide by my teaching, he shall never see death," the Pharisees cried out, "Now we know that thou art a Samaritan and hast a demon. Abraham is dead, and the prophets also; and thou sayest, 'If a man keep my word, he shall never see death.' Art thou greater than Abraham our father? And the prophets are dead—whom dost thou make thyself?" "If I glorify myself," Jesus replied, "my glory is nothing. It is

my Father who glorifies me, He who, you say, is your God—but you do not know Him. Abraham your father rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it, and was glad.” “Thou art not yet fifty years old,” they cried, “and hast thou seen Abraham?” “In truth, in very truth I say,” Jesus replied, “before Abraham was, I am.”

Then they ran for stones to stone him, but in the tumult of the crowd Jesus disappeared and went out of the temple.

It was the sabbath day, and Jesus passing by saw a man who was blind from his birth. His disciples said to him, “Rabbi, who was it that sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “It was not that either he sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be shown forth in him.”

Then Jesus mixed the dust with spittle, and having touched the man’s eyes with it, “Go,” he said, “and wash thee in the pool of Siloam.” The blind man went, and washed, and came back seeing. His neighbours and those who knew him said, “Is not this the blind man who used to sit begging?” Some said, “It is he”; others, “No, but it is like him”; but he said, “I am the man”; and he told them how his eyes had been opened.

They took him to the Pharisees, and the Pharisees questioned him, but they would not believe, and sent for his parents. “Is this your son,” they asked, “who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?” “We know,” they answered, “that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but how he now sees we do not know; who opened his eyes we do not know. He is of age, ask him and let him speak for himself.” They answered in this manner because they were afraid of the rulers; for it had already been agreed that any man who confessed Jesus to be the Christ should be thrust out of the synagogue.



The Raising of Lazarus.

The Pharisees sent for the man a second time. “Give the glory to God,” they said; “we know this Jesus to be a sinner.” “Of that I know nothing,” said the man; “one thing I do know, that I was blind, and now I see.” Again they asked what Jesus had done. “I have told you already,” he replied; “why do you want to hear it again? Would you also be his disciples?” They began to revile him. “Thou art his disciple!” they said; “we are disciples of Moses. We do know that God spoke to Moses; but as for this man, we know not whence he comes.” “Why, this is marvellous!—you do not know whence he comes, and yet he opened my eyes. Never has it been told since time began that any man has opened the eyes of one born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.” “Thou,” they cried in rage, “thou wast born steeped in sin, and dost thou teach us?” and they drove him out.

Jesus was told how he had been driven out, and meeting him again, he said to him, “Dost thou believe in the Son of God?” “Who is he, Lord,” the man answered, “that I may believe in him?” “Thou hast seen him,” Jesus said; “he it is who speaks to thee.” The man said, “Lord, I believe,” and fell at his feet.

Thereafter, when Jesus taught, many of the scribes and Pharisees said, “He has a demon, he is mad; why do you listen to him?” Said others, “These are not the words of a demoniac. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”

110. “AND WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR?”

ON the morning side of the Mount of Olives lay Bethany in its rugged glen among the palm-trees. Hither came Jesus from Jerusalem, and stayed in the home of Martha and Mary and Lazarus their brother.

Mary, seating herself beside the feet of Jesus, hung upon his words; but Martha was distracted with much

preparation. She came at last, and standing beside them, she said, "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister has left me to do everything? Speak to her then, and tell her to help me!"

Jesus replied, "Martha, Martha, thou art over-anxious and flurried about many things. Indeed only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen that good portion and it shall not be taken from her."

Before the feast Jesus had chosen seventy of his disciples, and sent them out two and two to the towns and villages whither it was in his mind to go. They returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons were subject to us through thy name." Jesus said, "Rejoice, not that the spirits are subject to you, but that your names are written in heaven."

Yet he was glad at heart and thanked God; and turning to the twelve, he said, "Happy are the eyes which see what you see! Many prophets and kings have longed to see those things, and have not seen them; and to hear the things which you hear, and have not heard them."

In one of the synagogues a doctor of the law stood up to test him. "Teacher, what shall I do," he asked, "to inherit life everlasting?" Jesus replied, "How is it written in the law? What dost thou read therein?" He answered, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself." "Thou hast answered well," Jesus said; "do this, and thou shalt live." "Yes," said he, wishing to appear righteous, "and who is my neighbour?" "There was a man," said Jesus, "who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho"—that wild way of jutting rocks and hidden gorges; "and he fell among robbers who wounded him, stripped him, and left him half dead. It chanced that a priest came down that way, glanced at him, and passed by. So too a Levite,

reaching the spot, came and looked, and went upon his way. Then came a Samaritan journeying, and when he saw the man naked and bleeding, he took pity on him, went to him, dressed his wounds with oil and wine, lifted him up on his own beast, and brought him to a khan, where he nursed him. On the morrow at his departure he gave the host two shillings and said, ‘Take care of him; whatever more is spent on him I will repay thee when I come again.’ Which of those three seems to thee to have proved a neighbour to the man who fell among robbers?”

“He who had pity on him,” said the doctor of the law.

“Even so,” said Jesus; “do thou the like.”

Rebuking the Pharisees, scribes and doctors of the law, “Woe to you,” he said, “who pay tithes on mint and rue and all manner of herbs, but take no heed of justice and the love of God. That you should have done, without leaving the other things undone. Woe to you, Pharisees, who love the first seats in the synagogues and salutes in the market-place! Woe also to you, doctors of the law, who put upon men burdens grievous to bear, yet touch not the burdens yourselves with one of your fingers! Woe to you who have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not yourselves enter, and those who would have entered you hindered.”

And warning men against greed and selfishness, he said, “The lands of a rich man had borne abundantly, and he said to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have no room for my harvest? I will pull down my barns and build larger; there will I store my crops and all my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast food laid up in plenty for many a year; take thy ease; eat, drink and be merry!’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! this night shall thy soul be required of thee; then for whom shall all these things be which thou hast provided?’”

He said also, "Sell what you have, and give alms. Make yourselves purses which will not wear empty, an unfailing treasure in the heavens, which no thief can come near and the moth cannot consume. For where your treasure is, there your heart will likewise be."

Once when he was told, "Thy mother and thy brothers stand without, wishing to see thee," he answered, "Whoever shall do the will of my Father in heaven is brother, and sister, and mother to me." And when a woman in the crowd lifted up her voice, "Blessed is she that bore thee and the breasts that suckled thee," he said, "Yea, rather, blessed are they who hear God's word and keep it."

111. THREE PARABLES.

As he went wayfaring among the towns and villages it strangely happened that some of the Pharisees came and warned him, "Get thee out of these regions, for Herod has a mind to kill thee." Jesus, who knew the craftiness of their hearts, answered them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Look you, to-day and to-morrow I am casting out demons and curing the afflicted, and on the third day I shall have done. Yet to-day and to-morrow and after to-morrow I must go on, for it is not fitting that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem.'"

Now it was winter, with stormy winds and squalls of snow; and it was the feast of lights, the feast of the dedication of the temple. The Jews gathered around him as he walked under Solomon's portico, and said, "How long wilt thou keep us in uncertainty? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly."

Jesus answered them, "I have told you, and you do not believe me. The works which I do in the name of my Father bear witness to me. You do not believe because you are not of my fold. My sheep hear my voice and follow me. I give them eternal life; they shall never perish. My Father, who gave them to me,

is greater than all, and no one can ravish them out of His hand. I and my Father are one."

Again they took up stones to stone him; but Jesus said, "I have shown you many good works from my Father; for which of these do you stone me?" "We do not stone thee for any good work, but for blasphemy, and because thou, who art a man, makest thyself God."

Then they strove to lay hold on him, but he escaped out of their hands.

As he looked back upon the city and the white splendour of the temple, he said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who slayest the prophets and stonest them that are sent to thee, how often would I have gathered thy children, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but thou wouldst not. Behold, your house shall be left to you desolate. Me you shall not see again until such time as you shall say, 'Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord.'"

He went again beyond Jordan to Bethabara, the place where John first baptized, and there he abode. Crowds resorted to him, and many said, "John wrought no miracles, but all he said of this man was true."

Upon a day, as Jesus reclined at table in the house of a Pharisee, he said to his host, "When thou givest a dinner or a supper, be not always asking thy friends, thy brothers, nor thy relatives, nor rich neighbours, lest they invite thee in return and thou be requited so. But call in the poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind. They cannot make thee any return, and blessed shalt thou be, for thy recompense will be given thee at the resurrection of the righteous."

Said one of the guests to him, "Blessed is he who shall be at table in the kingdom of God." Jesus answered, "Yes? . . . A man was giving a great supper, and he invited many people. He sent his servant at supper-time to bid them come, for everything was ready; but with one accord they all began to make excuses: 'I have bought some land, and

must go and look at it; excuse me, I pray you'; 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them; excuse me, I pray you'; 'I have been married, and I cannot come.' So the servant brought back word to his lord.

"Then the master of the house was angry and said to the servant, 'Go out quickly into the squares and the streets of the city, and bring hither the beggars and the cripples, and the blind, and the lame.' When he had done so, the servant said, 'Lord, there is still room.' The master replied, 'Go out into the roads and the hedge-sides, and constrain them to come in, so that my house may be filled. For not one, I say, of those whom I invited shall taste of my supper.'"

The tax-gatherers and loose-livers thronged to hear Jesus; and the Pharisees and scribes were murmuring, "This man welcomes people of evil life, and eats with them." Jesus who knew their thoughts, turned to the Pharisees and scribes, and told them these parables:

"Who among you, if he should have a hundred sheep and one goes astray, does not leave the ninety and nine in the desert, to go after the one that is lost until he finds it; and when he finds it, takes it joyfully on his shoulders; and when he comes home, calls his friends and neighbours, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost'? Even so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven for one sinner who repents than for ninety and nine righteous souls who need no repentance."

And he said, "A man had two sons, and the younger said to his father, 'Father, give me now the portion which will fall to my share.' And the father divided his livelihood between them. Not many days afterwards the younger son got his goods together, and went his way into a distant country where he wasted them in wild living. When all was spent, there came a bitter famine in that country, and he began to be in want. He attached himself to one of the townsmen of the land, who sent him out into his fields to feed swine.

Fain he was to take his fill of the husks of the locust-trees which the swine ate, for there was no man giving him anything.

“Then, when he had come to his wits, ‘How many hirelings in my father’s house,’ he said, ‘have bread enough and to spare, and I am perishing of hunger! I will arise, I will go to my father, I will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thine eyes, I am no longer fit to be called thy son—take me as one of thy hirelings.’”

“He arose and went to his father. And while he was yet a great way off, who but his father saw him, knew him in his beggary, was moved with pity, ran and clung to his neck, and was kissing and kissing him? The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy eyes; I am no longer fit to be called thy son—’ But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quick! fetch the richest robe and clothe him; put the ring of gold on his finger, and shoes on his feet. Take the fatted calf and slay it. Let us feast and make merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found.’ And they began to make merry.

“Now the elder son was at the farm. As he drew near the house on his return, he heard music and dancing, and calling one of the servants he asked what it might be. ‘Thy brother is come,’ said the servant; ‘and thy father has killed the fatted calf, because he is home again safe and well.’ The elder son was angry, and would not go in. His father went out and intreated him, but he replied, ‘So many years as I have served thee, and not once gone against thy will, never hast thou given me even a kid, to make merry with my friends; but this son who squandered thy wealth in shameless living—the moment he comes the fatted calf is killed for him!’”

“‘O son,’ said the father, ‘thou art always with me; all I have is thine; but needs must we make merry and rejoice, for this thy brother was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found.’”

This likewise he told them, rebuking their luxury and their lack of pity :

“ A rich man there was who went in Tyrian purple and white linen of Egypt, and each day he feasted in splendour. And there was a beggar named Lazarus, loathly to see, who was laid in his portico, wishing to be filled with the morsels that fell from the rich man’s table. The curs of the streets licked him, too feeble to drive them away.

“ The beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died, and was buried. In Sheol, the place of the dead, as he lifted up his eyes in his torments, he saw from afar Abraham, and Lazarus in his bosom, and he cried out, ‘ Father Abraham, have pity on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tortured in this flame.’

“ ‘ Son,’ said Abraham, ‘ remember that in thy life thou hadst thy good things, and in like wise Lazarus had evil things. Now he is comforted here, and thou art in anguish. Moreover there is between us and you a great gulf, so that, if any would, he shall not pass from us to you, nor yet from thence to us.’

“ The rich man said, ‘ I pray thee then, father Abraham, do thou send him to my father’s house, for I have five brothers, that he may bear witness to these things, lest they too come into this place of torments.’ Abraham answered, ‘ They have Moses and the prophets, let them hearken to them.’ But he said, ‘ Nay, father Abraham; but if one from the dead may go to them, they will repent.’ Abraham replied, ‘ If they will not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.’ ”

112. AT THE GRAVE OF LAZARUS.

JESUS was still at Bethabara when the sisters of Lazarus sent him word from Bethany, “ Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick.” Now Jesus loved Martha

and her sister and Lazarus; but he said to his disciples, "This sickness is not towards death; it comes for the glory of God, and the glory of the Son of God."

So, for two days he tarried in the place where he was, and then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back again into Judæa." "Rabbi," they exclaimed, "it was but yesterday that the men of Judæa were seeking to stone thee, and wilt thou go thither again?" Jesus said to them, "Lazarus, our friend, is sleeping; I go that I may awaken him from his slumber." "If he is sleeping, Lord," they replied, "he will recover." Then, seeing that they did not understand him, he said, "Lazarus is dead. And for your sakes, so that you may believe, I am glad that I was not there. But let us go to him." Thereupon Thomas, thinking of the fury of the Jews, said to the other disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

When Jesus was come to Bethany, he found that Lazarus was already four days in the tomb. And Bethany being but fifteen furlongs away from Jerusalem, many Jews had come down to Martha and Mary, to comfort them because of their brother.

As soon as Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him, but Mary sat still at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother would not have died. But even now, I know that what thing soever thou shalt ask of God, God will give it to thee." Jesus said to her, "Thy brother shall rise again." "I know," Martha answered, "that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believes in me, even though he die, shall live; and he that is alive and believes in me shall never die. Dost thou believe this?" "Yes, Lord," said Martha, "I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."

Then she went and quietly called her sister and said to her, "The master is here, and is asking for thee." Quickly Mary arose and went out to meet him, for Jesus

had not come into the village, but was still at the place where Martha met him. When they saw her thus hastily leave them, the Jews who had been in the house with Mary said, "She has gone to the tomb to weep," and they followed her.

But when Mary saw Jesus, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother would not have died." Jesus, seeing her sobbing and the Jews who came with her wailing, felt his soul within him shaken with sorrow. "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Lord," they answered, "come and see."

Jesus wept. "See you," the Jews said, "how he loved him!" Others whispered together, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind have also made it that this man should not die?"

Again Jesus felt his spirit shaken within him as he went to the tomb. It was a cave in the rock, and a stone was laid at the entrance. Jesus said, "Take away the stone"; but Martha, the sister of the dead man, said, "Nay, Lord, for already he is changed; he has been dead four days." Jesus replied, "Did I not tell thee, If thou believest thou shalt see the glory of God?"

They took the stone away. Jesus, lifting up his eyes, said, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard me. And I knew that Thou hearest me always; but I have spoken because of the people standing by, that they may believe Thou hast sent me."

Then he cried with a great voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" Forth the dead man came, his hands and feet bound with bands for the grave, his face wrapped in a face-cloth. Jesus said, "Unbind him and let him go."

Many of the Jews who had come to Mary believed when they saw these things; but others hastened to the Pharisees, and told them what Jesus had done.

113. THE LAST WAYFARING.

THEN the chief priests and Pharisees assembled the great council. "What are we doing?" they asked. "Sitting with folded hands? Yet this man works many wonders. If we let him alone, all will believe in him, hail him as Messiah, make him a king. Then will the Romans come, ding down our city, and destroy our nation."

But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high-priest at that time, said brusquely, "You do not understand this matter at all. You do not perceive how expedient it is for us that one man (who sets us at nought and endangers us with Rome) should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish."

This indeed Caiaphas did not speak of his own motion, but the spirit of prophecy alighted on him as high-priest. So, unaware, he foretold that Jesus should die for the nation. And not for the nation alone, but that he should gather into one all the children of God, wheresoever scattered abroad.

From that day these councillors plotted to slay him. Therefore Jesus no longer showed himself openly among the Jews, but departed into the hill country about Ephraim city on the edge of the wilderness, and dwelt for a time there with his disciples.

Afterwards as he drew near a village in his wayfaring, ten lepers came out to meet him; and standing a long way off they lifted up their voices, beseeching, "Jesus, master, take pity on us." Looking on their miserable estate, he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests"; and, strange to tell, while they were on their way their leprosy vanished from them.

Then one of them, when he saw that he was cleansed, turned back, glorifying God in a loud voice; and falling at the feet of Jesus, gave him thanks. This man was a Samaritan. Jesus said, "Were not the ten cured? The other nine then, where are they? Is there not one

found but this alien to come back and give God glory?" Turning to the Samaritan, he said, "Arise and go thy way. Thy faith has delivered thee."

And as showing that men ought always to pray and not be disheartened, he told this parable: "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor heeded man. There was also a widow in that city; and she kept coming to the judge and crying to him, 'Do me justice against my opponent.' For a long time he would not, but at length he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor heed man, yet this widow teases me so that I will give her redress, lest her worry should plague me to death.'" The Lord said, "Hear the words of the unjust judge. And will not God do justice to His chosen people, who cry out to Him day and night; and will He be slow to heed them? I tell you He will redress them speedily. But when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

And this parable he told regarding persons assured of their own righteousness and scornful of others: "Two men went up into the temple to pray—one a Pharisee, the other a tax-gatherer. The Pharisee, standing with head high, prayed thus to himself, 'God, I thank Thee that I am not like the rest of men—extortioners, unrighteous, depraved, or even such as this tax-gatherer. Twice in the week I fast; of all I gain I give a tithe.'

"The tax-gatherer, standing aloof, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven; he was beating his breast and saying, 'God, take pity on me the sinner.'

"This man, I tell you, rather than the other, went to his home accounted righteous. For whoso exalts himself shall be abased, and he that humbles himself shall be exalted."

As Jesus went upon his way, there came to him, running, a young man who knelt at his feet and said,

“ Good master, what am I to do that I may have life everlasting ? ” Jesus said to him, “ Why dost thou call me good ?—there is none good but God alone. Thou knowest the commandments, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother— ” “ Master, ” he answered, “ all these things I have observed from my youth. ”

Jesus, looking at the young man, loved him. “ In one thing, ” he said, “ thou art wanting. Go and sell whatever thou hast, give it to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; then come and follow me. ” But when the young man heard those words, he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions.

And Jesus, looking round on his disciples, said, “ How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God ! ”

As they passed beside a vineyard, men were busy pruning the wasteful shoots, and topping the stone dykes with thorn bush against the jackals and the little foxes which spoil the vines.

Jesus said, “ The kingdom of heaven is like the master of a house who went out at sunrise to hire labourers, and having agreed with them for a shilling a day sent them into his vineyard. About the third hour also he went out, and saw others in the market-place standing idle. ‘ Go you also into my vineyard, ’ he said to them, ‘ and I will give you what will be fair ’; and they went.

“ At the sixth hour, in the noontide, and about the ninth hour, he went forth again, and did the like. Then, having once more gone out about the eleventh hour (when the shadows were lengthening in the sun and the clouds were colouring) he found yet others in the market-place, and said to them, ‘ Why are you standing here all the day idle ? ’ ‘ Because, ’ said they, ‘ no one has hired us. ’ ‘ Then, ’ he answered, ‘ go you also into my vineyard. ’

“When evening was come, the master of the vineyard said to his intendant, ‘Call the labourers hither and give them their wages, beginning from the last on to the first.’ Those of the eleventh hour came, and they received each man a shilling. But the first, when their turn came, looked to have more, and when they each received only a shilling, they began to murmur against the master of the house: ‘These last have wrought but an hour, and thou hast made them equal to us, who have borne the burden of the day and the heat.’

“‘Friend,’ said the master to one of them, ‘I do thee no wrong. Didst thou not agree with me for a shilling? Take what is thine, and depart. I choose to give this last comer no less than I give thee. May I not do with my own what I will? Or is thy eye jaundiced because I am generous?’

“Thus,” said Jesus, “shall the last be first, and the first be last.”

114. THE HOME AT BETHANY.

KEEN it was still on the high wolds, but in the hollow Jordan country it was the bloom of the year. As they came by the way of Jordan, Jesus drew the twelve apart from the rest and said to them, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the scribes. They will condemn him to death, and deliver him up to the pagans, to mock, and to spit upon, and to scourge with rods, and to crucify him; and on the third day he will rise again.”

But the disciples did not understand him at all; the sense of his words was hidden from them, and they knew not of what things in the world he was speaking.

Through the green oasis of Jericho they came up from Jordan, and with them a great company of pilgrims wending their way to the passover. As they drew near to Jericho city, blind Bartimæus sat begging

by the roadside. At the sound of a multitude going by, he asked what it might be. They told him it was Jesus of Nazareth, and he began to cry out, "Jesus, son of David, take pity on me!" Many tried to stop him, but he cried only the louder, "Son of David, take pity on me!"

Jesus stood still, and bade the blind man be brought to him. Then the people said to Bartimæus, "Courage! Up! He is calling thee." To his feet leaped the blind man, cast away his cloak in his haste, and ran to Jesus. Jesus said to him, "What wouldst thou have me do for thee?" "Rabboni," he answered, "that I might see again!" Jesus said, "See again. Thy faith has delivered thee."

On the instant the blind man recovered his sight, and followed Jesus, glorifying God.

They passed through Jericho. Now there was a rich man, named Zacchæus, a chief commissioner of taxes, that wished to see who Jesus was, but being low of stature, he could not because of the crowds. So he ran on before, and climbed into a fig-tree by the wayside where Jesus was to pass that he might behold him.

When Jesus came to the place, he raised his eyes and said to him, "Come down quickly, Zacchæus, for I must stop to-day in thy house." Zacchæus hastened down, and welcomed him with joy. But when the people saw this, they murmured and said, "He is gone to stay in the house of a man of sin."

Before the day was done, Zacchæus stood beside Jesus and said, "Behold, Lord, half of my earnings I now give to the poor, and if I have extorted aught from any man, I make it good to him fourfold." Jesus replied, "This day is salvation come into this house, since this man also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

From Jericho in its oasis the country rolled up in a moorland wilderness, and the pilgrims toiled along the

zig-zag road between hillsides weathered into weird shapes of strangely coloured limestone.

When at last they reached Jerusalem they found that the chief priests and the Pharisees had given order that whoso could tell where Jesus was should make it known, so that they might lay hands upon him. As the pilgrims talked together in the temple, they were all question and conjecture; "What think you? Will he not come to the feast?"

But Jesus tarried at Bethany, the village of Lazarus; and it was the sabbath before the passover.

In Bethany they made a supper for him. Martha was serving them; and Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead, was among those who reclined with him at table. Then came Mary with a vase of pure and very costly spikenard perfume, bathed his feet with it, and wiped his feet with her hair. All the house was filled with the fragrance of the spikenard.

One of the disciples, Judas Iscariot, he who was soon to betray him, said, "Why was not this perfume sold for three hundred shillings, and so given to the poor?"—not that he was caring for the poor, but because he was a thief and pilfered from their common purse, which he carried.

But Jesus said, "Let her alone; she has kept this against the day of my embalming. The poor you have with you always, and can be good to them when you will; but me you have not always."

A great number of the Jews heard that Jesus was at Bethany, and they came, not for the sake of Jesus alone, but also to look on Lazarus whom he had raised from the dead. When the chief priests perceived how, because of him, many Jews were forsaking them and believing in Jesus, they took counsel together to make an end of Lazarus.



Christ walking on the Sea.

115. THE COMING OF THE KING.

ON the following day Jesus sent two of the disciples to the village among the fig-trees on the hillside opposite. "There, as you enter," he said, "you shall see a colt tied up. If any one ask you why you loose it, you shall answer, Because the Lord needs it." So they went and led the colt to him; the disciples laid their garments upon it, and Jesus sat thereon. And a great throng strewed green sprays and spread their garments on the mountain track. They came to the spot where the road bends over the Mount of Olives, and there, despite the great council, a multitude from the Galilean tents on the hillside came forth to meet him with palm-branches from the trees. Then the crowds which descended before him and those which followed him went crying, "Hosanna! Blessed be he that cometh, king in the name of the Lord!"

So was fulfilled the saying of the prophet, "Rejoice, thou daughter of Zion; shout, thou daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, thy king comes to thee"—not in brazen chariots, nor with archers riding royally—but "meek, sitting upon an ass's colt."

But when Jesus came in view of the city he loved, he burst into tears, and wept aloud, "If thou, too, at least in this day which is thine, didst but know what things belong to thy peace! Now alas! they are hidden from thine eyes. Days will come upon thee when thine enemies will cast earthworks about thee and beleaguer thee on every side; and they will dash thee to the ground and thy children in the midst of thee, and will not leave stone upon stone in thee, because thou hast not known the time when God looked graciously upon thee."

When he came into Jerusalem all the city was in commotion—"Who is this? Who is this?" And voices from the multitudes answered, "This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth in Galilee."

Some of the Pharisees in the press said to Jesus,

“Teacher, restrain thy disciples!” Jesus replied, “I tell you, if these be mute the stones themselves will cry out.”

116. JESUS AND THE PHARISEES.

IN these days before the feast Jesus went out at eventide to Martha and Mary and Lazarus and the quiet of the palms of Bethany; in the starry twilight of the morning he returned to the city and taught in the temple, and the blind and lame came to him and were healed.

On a day when the priests and the scribes saw these wonders, and the boys and girls in the temple courts were shouting “Hosanna to the son of David,” they asked him angrily, “Dost thou hear what those children are saying?” “Ay,” Jesus replied; “Did you never read, ‘Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise’?”

Then as he was teaching, the chief priests and elders came and questioned him, “By what manner of authority art thou doing these things, and who gave thee the authority?” “A like question I will put to you,” Jesus answered; “if you answer me I will tell you my authority. The baptism of John—whence was it, from heaven or from men?”

The chief priests and elders argued among themselves, “If we say ‘from heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Why then did you not believe?’ And if we say ‘from men,’ we shall go in fear of the people, they will stone us”—for the people all held John for a prophet. So they replied, “We cannot tell.” “No,” said Jesus, “nor shall I tell by what authority I do these things.”

Then suddenly he flashed upon them, “How does it seem to you—A man had two sons; and to the first of them he said, ‘Son, go and work to-day in my vineyard.’ ‘I do not want to,’ he answered, but coming afterwards to a better mind, he went. To the second son he said the like. ‘Willingly, sir,’ answered he;

but he did not go. Which of these two sons did his father's bidding?" "The first," they replied.

And Jesus said to them, "Of a truth I tell you, the tax-gatherers and the courtesans are going into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him. But the tax-gatherers, and courtesans did believe him; and though you saw this, you did not come to a better mind. Give ear to another parable.

"The master of a house planted a vineyard. He set a dyke round it, sank a wine-press, and built a watch-tower; then he let it out to certain vine-dressers, and went abroad into a foreign country. At the vintage season he sent his servants for the produce of his vineyard; but the vine-dressers beat and stoned them. Again, and yet a third time, he sent, but they ill-treated the servants shamefully, and drove them away wounded. Last of all, the master of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I have one son, my well-beloved; to him they will show respect when they see him.' But when the vine-dressers saw his son, they said, 'This is the heir; let us kill him and take his inheritance.' They laid hands on him, slew him, and flung out his body to the vultures. When the master of the vineyard comes, what will he do to these vine-dressers?"

Said they, "He will make a wretched end of such wretched men, and will let his vineyard to other vine-dressers who will yield him the produce at the vintage."

Then, fixing his eyes on them, Jesus said, "Therefore, I tell you, the kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and it shall be given to a nation which will yield the produce of the kingdom."

The chief priests and Pharisees, perceiving that it was of them he spoke, were burning to seize him; but they feared the multitude, for the common people held him to be a prophet, and heard him gladly.

Then to ensnare him in his own words, the Pharisees sent scholars of theirs and emissaries of king Herod's

party to question him. "Teacher," they said, "we know that thou art sincere, and that thou teachest the way of God faithfully and fearlessly, for thou art no respecter of persons, tell us then, what thinkest thou? —is it lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar, or is it not?"

"Why do you seek to entrap me?" Jesus replied, for he knew their guile. "Show me the tribute money." They gave him a silver denarion. "Whose image is this?" he asked, "and the inscription?" "Cæsar's," they answered. "Then," Jesus said, "render to Cæsar what is Cæsar's, and to God what is God's."

When they heard his answer, they turned away abashed and marvelling. Still even among the chief rulers there were many who believed in him, but they feared to declare their belief lest the Pharisees should thrust them forth from communion.

As Jesus sat and rested in the temple, he raised his eyes and watched how the people put their money offerings into the bronze trumpets of the treasury. Many who were rich gave generously. And there came a poor widow, and he saw how she cast in two lepta, little bronze mites, the smallest of money. Calling his disciples to him, he said, "Of a truth this poor widow has given more than any of those who have cast into the coffers. They gave of their abundance; she out of her poverty has given all she had, her whole living."

117. OF THE DAYS TO COME.

It was evening and Jesus was departing from the temple when one of the disciples said to him, "See, master, the great and fair stones of these buildings!" But Jesus answered, "Do thou look at these mighty buildings. Not one stone upon another in them but shall be overturned."

In silence they descended into the valley of Kedron; and as Jesus was sitting on Olivet and gazing at the temple in the light of the setting sun, Peter and James and John and Andrew sat beside his feet, and one of

them said to him, "Tell us, when shall these things come to pass?"

The vision rose before him, and he foretold them of the days drawing nigh with war and flight and overthrow, the beginning of sorrows; warned them of the trials and sufferings that would befall them; and revealed the signs of his coming and of the end of the world. "They will deliver you to torments and to death," he said, "and you shall be hated among all nations because of my name. Brother shall be false to brother, father shall betray son, children shall rise against their parents. False Christs shall appear, and false prophets; and such wonders shall they work as to deceive, were it possible, even the chosen souls. Believe them not; I have forewarned you.

"Then after the tribulation of those days there shall be signs in the heavens, the shining powers of the heavens shall be shaken; and earth shall be filled with the distress of nations. Then shall the Son of man be seen coming in the clouds. But of that day and hour no man doth know, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father alone. In those days the kingdom of heaven shall be like ten virgins who, taking their lamps, went out to welcome the bridegroom bringing home his bride.

"Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. The foolish in taking their lamps did not take sufficient oil, but the wise took vases of oil with them. Long and long did the bridegroom tarry; they all were drowsing, and they fell asleep. In the middle of the night came a sound of music and singing, and a voice cried, 'Ho! the bridegroom; go out and meet him.'

"Then all those virgins awoke and were trimming their lamps. The foolish said to the wise, 'Give us of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' 'We cannot,' the wise answered, 'there would not be enough for us both. Better you should go to those who sell and buy yourselves some.' While they were away buying the bridegroom arrived. Those who were ready went with him into the bridal hall, and the doors were shut.

Afterwards came the foolish virgins and said, 'Lord, lord, let us in!' But he answered, 'In very truth, I do not know you.'

"Watch therefore, for you know not the day nor the hour."

This also he said of the end of the world.

"When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory; and gathered together before him shall be all the nations. One from another he shall separate them, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and the sheep he shall place on his right hand, and the goats on his left.

"Then to those on his right hand the King shall say, 'Come you, the blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me to eat; I thirsted, and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger, and you took me into your homes; I was naked, and you clothed me; I was sick, and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came to me.'

"Then the righteous shall answer, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry and give thee to eat; or athirst and gave thee to drink; when did we see thee a stranger and take thee into our homes; or naked and clothed thee; when did we see thee sick or in prison and went to thee?' Then shall the King say, 'So long as you did these things for one of the least of these my brethren, truly you did them for me.'

"But to those on the left he shall say, 'Depart from me, accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Evil One and for his angels. So long as you did these things for none of the least of these, you did them not to me.'

"And these shall go into eternal punishment, but the righteous into life everlasting."

The light of the west was failing, and blue mists were stealing along the hills of Moab, as for the last

time Jesus and his disciples went down to the house in Bethany.

Two days more, and it would be the passover. In the court of Caiaphas the chief priests and the scribes and elders sat plotting by what subtilty they might do away with Jesus. Yet the shadow of fear lay upon them. "Let it not be on the day of the feast," they said, "lest the common people rise up against us."

But Satan had entered into Judas the Iscariot. He went to the chief priests and said, "What have you a mind to give me and I deliver him to you?" They agreed with him for thirty silver staters,* the blood-money of a slave. He took counsel with the captains of the temple guard, and from that hour he lay in wait to betray him without danger from the multitude.

118. THE LAST SUPPER.

ON the morrow Jesus said to Peter and John, "Go into the city. There you will meet a man carrying a jar of water. Follow him into the house which he enters, and say to the master, 'The Teacher bids us ask thee, Where is the guest-chamber wherein I shall eat the passover with my disciples?' He will show you a large upper-room; do you make all ready there." And as he said, so it fell out.

That day he rested in the peace of Bethany, with Martha and Mary and Lazarus until eventide. Then he went up to Jerusalem with the twelve. When supper was ready, he laid aside his garments, and pouring water into a basin, he began to wash his disciples' feet and to dry them with the cloth he had girded about him.

He came to Simon Peter, but Peter said, "Thou, Lord! thou wash my feet?" "What I do," Jesus answered, "thou knowest not now, but thou shalt understand hereafter." Peter said, "Never, never shalt thou wash my feet!" Jesus replied, "If I do

* £4 16s. HASTINGS: *Dictionary of the Bible.*

not wash thee, thou hast no part with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet alone, but my hands and my head also." Jesus said, "He who is washed, were it but his feet, is clean every whit. And you are clean—but not all," for he knew who would betray him.

As they reclined at table and were eating, Jesus grew troubled in spirit and said, "Of a truth I tell you, one of you will betray me." The disciples in their distress began to say, "Is it I, Lord?" "Is it I?" but Jesus continued, "The Son of man indeed fares hence, as it has been predestined; but woe to him by whom he is betrayed! Good for him never to have been born."

Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of the disciples whom he loved. At a sign from Simon Peter this disciple said, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus dipped a morsel in the dish and said, "He it is to whom I shall give this sop." He gave it to Judas Iscariot and said to him, "What thou art doing, do quickly"; and seeing that Judas carried the purse, some thought Jesus said, "Buy what we need against the feast," or "Give something to the poor." When Judas had received the sop, he went out. And it was night.

Then Jesus, taking bread, blessed it and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it and eat; this is my body which is being given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." He took the cup also, and when he had thanked God he gave it to them; and they all drank it. "This," he said, "is my blood—the pledge of the new covenant—which is being shed for many. Verily I say to you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

Afterwards he said to them, "Little children, for yet a little while I am with you. I give you a new commandment—Love one another; as I have loved you. By this all men shall know that you are my disciples." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, whither farest thou?"

and Jesus answered, "Whither I fare forth thou canst not now follow me, but hereafter thou shalt follow me. Yet a little while, and the world sees me no more; but I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you; you shall see me, for I live, and you also shall be alive."

Judas, not the Iscariot but that other, said to him, "Lord, how wilt thou show thyself to us, and yet not to the world?" "If a man love me," Jesus replied, "he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him."

"These things I have said to you while I am still with you—and I have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now; but the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom my Father will send in my name, will teach you all things, and will bring to your remembrance all that I have told you.

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give you as the world gives. Let not your hearts be troubled, nor yet afraid.

"When the Comforter is with you, He will bear testimony of me; and you too shall bear testimony, for you have been with me from the beginning.

"Arise, and let us go hence."

They rose and sang together the hymn which begins—

"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us,
But unto Thy name give glory,"

and this is the end of it—

"Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good,
For His pity endures for ever."

Then they went forth. The moon, well nigh at the full, silvered the narrow streets, the temple and its palm-trees, the rugged way down into the valley. They crossed Kedron. That way David went up weeping into the Mount of Olives; at the brook Ittai, the captain of the Gittite guard, swore by God's life and

the king's life, "In what place soever the king my lord shall be, there shall I thy servant be."

Then Jesus said, "The hour is come when all you shall fall away from me, and be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. But after I am arisen I shall go before you into Galilee." Peter said, "Though all fall away from thee, never shall I." "Nay," Jesus answered, "this day, even in this night, before cock-crow thou shalt deny me thrice." All the more vehemently Peter said, "Though I were to die with thee, I will not deny thee." So too spoke the other disciples.

Jesus said again to them, "When I sent you without purse and wallet and shoes, did you lack anything?" "Nothing," they answered. "But now," he rejoined, "let him that has a purse, take it, and his wallet too; and he who has no sword, let him sell his cloak and buy a sword." "Lord," said one, "here are two swords"; but Jesus replied "Enough!" for he perceived that they did not understand him at all.

They came to Gethsemane, the moonlit garden of olive-trees, with its oil-press of great stones in the midst. "Stay you here," he said to his disciples, "while I go yonder and pray"; and he took Peter and James and John with him.

Then he began to be appalled and weighed down with distress. "My soul," he said to them, "is exceeding sorrowful, even to death. Stay you here, and watch with me."

He went further about a stone's throw, and falling on his face, he prayed, "Abba, Father, if it be possible, take away from me this cup of anguish; nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt." Then out of heaven an angel appeared to him, to strengthen him. And being in an agony of dismay, he prayed still more urgently; and his sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

Rising up, he came to the disciples; but these three

who slept in the glory on Hermon were now sleeping for sorrow. He said to Peter, "Simon, dost thou sleep? Couldst thou not watch with me one hour? Truly the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." He went back to pray: "My Father, if it cannot be that this cup pass unless I drink it, Thy will be done." He came, and found them again asleep, for their eyes were laden; they knew not what to say. He came a third time. "Sleep on," he said, "and take your rest. The hour is come, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go; he that betrays me is here."

119. THE KISS OF THE TRAITOR.

WHILE he spoke they heard the dooeful tramp of armed men and the hoarse sound of a great crowd in confused haste. Tossing lights flared red through the black and the silvered masses of the olive-trees. Sharp words of command rang through the noise; and the tramp of the Roman cohort ceased as the legionaries, six hundred strong, were posted round Gethsemane. Where, Ittai, wert thou with the king's guard this night?

Then with torches and lanterns, swords and clubs, the rabble of the chief priests and the elders poured into the garden at the heels of the traitor. He knew the spot which Jesus loved. He led them to it; there stood Jesus in the moonlight. "Hail, master," said the disciple, and kissed him. But Jesus said, "Judas, dost thou betray the Son of man with a kiss?"

Then going forth, he confronted the glare of lights and the malign faces. "Whom do you seek?" he asked. "Jesus the Nazarene," they cried. Jesus answered, "I am he." As he spoke he fixed on them those serene eyes with which he quelled death on the brink of the abyss at Nazareth; perchance, too, something of the glory of Hermon again appeared in his face. At his words the fierce clamour died in their

throats, and a wave of the power of a supreme soul bore them backward to the earth.

"I have told you I am he," Jesus said. "If it be I you seek, let these men go their way." But the disciples closed around him. "Lord," they asked, "shall we smite with the sword?" At that moment Peter's sword was out. He struck at Malchus, the high-priest's servant, came short of his head, but severed his ear. "Sheathe thy sword," Jesus said; "all that take the sword shall perish by the sword. Dost thou think I cannot now ask my Father, and have on the instant more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled?" Then touching the ear of Malchus, he healed the wound.

As the foremost laid hands upon him, he said to the crowd, "You come against me with swords and clubs as though I were a robber. Day by day I was among you, teaching in the temple, and no hand was raised to take me. But this is your hour, and the dominion of darkness."

The officers of the priests bound him; the disciples fled; the legionaries enclosed him in their ranks. As they passed with lights and great noise, there sprang up from sleep, strangely aware of what had happened, a young man who cast a linen cloth round him and ran out to follow the multitude. The Jews would have seized him, but he left the linen cloth in their hands and fled from them naked. This young man, they say, was Mark, who afterwards wrote of Jesus.

Amid that excited throng followed two others, well-nigh distraught with sorrow and dismay. These were Simon Peter and John.

120. THE MOCKERY OF JUSTICE.

THEY brought him to the high-priest's palace. Peter stopped without at the entrance, but John, who was known to the high-priest, went into the court, spoke to the maid who kept the doors, and brought Peter in

also. Glancing at him, the maid said, "Art thou, too, one of this man's disciples?" and Peter replied, "I am not."

Jesus was taken first before Annas, high-priest in former years. In the court the servants and officers stood round a brasier of charcoal, for the night was cold; and Peter, beside them, warmed himself in the light of the fire, waiting to see the end.

Jesus stood in bonds before the old priest, and Annas questioned him of his disciples and his teaching. "I have ever taught in synagogues and in the temple," Jesus answered; "in secret I have said nothing. Ask these who have heard me." An officer, who stood by, smote him in the face with his open hand—"Dost thou answer the high-priest thus?" Jesus said, "If I have spoken evilly, bear witness to the evil; but if well, why dost thou strike me?" Then Annas sent him to Caiaphas his son-in-law.

A maid beside the fire in the court, looking steadfastly at Peter, said, "This man also was with him," but Peter protested, "Woman, I know him not." And one of the high-priest's servants, a kinsman of Malchus, said, "Did I not see thee in the garden with him?" For the third time Peter denied him; the cock crew; and as they led Jesus to Caiaphas, the Lord turned and looked at him; and Peter, remembering all, went out and wept bitterly.

Before Caiaphas and the great council Jesus spoke not a word in reply to the false witnesses brought against him. At length the high-priest said, "By the living God I adjure thee, tell us whether thou art the Christ, the Son of God." "It is even as thou sayest," Jesus answered; "and hereafter you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven." Caiaphas rent his robes. "What need have we," he cried, "of further witnesses? You have heard his blasphemy. What think you?" The great council gave a single voice, "He deserves death."

Then the men who held him began to spit in his face and to buffet him; and the servants blindfolded him, and smiting him on the face with their open hands, said in mockery, "Prophecy, thou Messiah, who struck thee."

Meanwhile the smoke of incense was ascending from the golden altar in the holy place, and thousands of devout Jews from the ends of Israel were praying before the veil of imagery. It was morning. Sadducee and Pharisee, chief priests, elders, scribes, Herodians were impatient for the end. Little they recked of the forty days' respite which the law accorded to a man accused. The whole of the great council hurried Jesus away to Pontius Pilate the governor for confirmation of their sentence.

On the threshold of pagan Rome they stopped short. The passover was at hand; if they entered the pretorium, they might be defiled and excluded from the feast. They would not enter, and Pilate went out to meet them. "What is your charge against this man?" he asked. "Had he not been an evil doer," they answered haughtily, "we had not delivered him up to thee." "Take him then, and punish him according to your laws." "How can we?" they replied; "we have not the right of sword and gibbet."

When they saw that it was not the Roman way to sentence without trial, they began to accuse Jesus. He was perverting the nation; had forbidden payment of tribute; had declared himself to be Messiah, a king. Pilate returned into the pretorium, and questioned Jesus. "Art thou king of the Jews?" "My kingdom," he answered, "is not of this world. If it were, the swords of my people would have saved me from the hands of the Jews. But my kingdom is not of the sword." "Then thou art a king?" "As thou sayest, I am a king. I was born, I came into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Whoever is truth's man listens to my voice." "Truth!" exclaimed Pilate with a touch of pity, "what is truth?"

He went out again to the council. "I find no guilt in this man," he said; but they clamoured still more fiercely, "He has stirred up the people from Galilee to Jerusalem." "Galilee? Is this man a Galilean?" Pilate asked. When he knew that he was one of Herod's subjects, he sent him to the king, who had arrived for the passover.

In the old palace overlooking the temple, Herod, who had outgrown his dread that John had risen from the grave, was in lively mood. He hoped to see some miracle wrought by the prophet of whom he had heard so much. He asked him many questions, but Jesus stood silent. Disappointed and piqued, Herod and his men-at-arms scoffed at him, and arraying him in a robe of state, sent him back to Pilate, a mockery of a king. That day the Roman and the Idumean forgot an old feud and were reconciled.

As the chief priests and rulers were returning to the pretorium Pilate's wife sent a message to him, "Do thou have nothing to do with that righteous man; much have I suffered this night in a dream on account of him."

Then Pilate said once again to the Jews, "I have found no guilt in this man; nor has Herod, to whom I sent him. It is a custom at the passover to have a prisoner released to you; would you have me release you the king of the Jews?" "No," they shouted, "not this man but Barabbas"—a robber who was in chains for murder and insurrection. Wishing to free Jesus, Pilate again appealed to them, but they kept crying out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" "Why, what evil has he done? I find no guilt to merit death. I will chastise him, and let him go."

They scourged Jesus. The soldiers put a scarlet robe upon him, platted a wreath of thorns and crowned him, placed a reed in his right hand, and bending knee before him in mockery, hailed him king of the Jews. Then they spat upon him, struck him with their hands, smote him on the thorn-crowned head with his own sceptre, the reed.

Pilate spoke again to the multitude, "See, I bring this man forth that I may declare him guiltless." Jesus came wearing the crown of thorns and the scarlet robe. "Behold the man!" said Pilate. "Crucify him, crucify him!" came the cry from innumerable voices. "Take him, you, and crucify him; I find him guiltless."

"We have a law," said the chief priests, "and by our law he should die, because he has made himself the Son of God." Pilate, as he heard the words, felt a strange awe overmastering him. The Son of God! "Whence art thou?" he said to Jesus, but there was no answer. "Wilt thou not speak to me?" he asked. "Dost thou not know that I have power to crucify thee, and power to release thee?" "Thou hast no power over me," Jesus said, "but what is given thee from on high."

From that moment Pilate endeavoured to save him, but the Jews said, "If thou free'st this man, thou art no friend of Cæsar's. Whoever makes himself a king sets himself up against Cæsar." Then Pilate took his place on the judgment-seat on the mosaic pavement called the Gabbatha. It was drawing to noon, when the Jews prepared for the passover. "Behold your king!" he said scornfully. "Away, away!" they shouted, "crucify him!" "Shall I crucify your king?" Pilate asked; and the chief priests answered, "We have no king but Cæsar!"

Seeing then that no words were of any avail, but that a tumult was rising, Pilate took water and washed his hands before the multitude. "I am innocent," he said, "of the blood of this guiltless man. See you to it!" And all the people responded, "Let his blood be upon us, and upon our children."

Thereupon he gave Jesus over to their will.

When Judas saw that he was doomed, he bitterly regretted what he had done. He brought back the thirty silver pieces to the chief priests and the elders, and said, "I have sinned, betraying innocent blood."



Peter and John healing the Lame Man.

“What is that to us?” they replied; “see thou to it.” He flung down the money on the temple floor and departed. On a tree among the rocks in the valley of Hinnom, where night and day the refuse of the city smouldered in the fires, he hanged himself.

That money, the price of blood, it was not lawful to lay up in the treasury. A piece of ground in the valley was bought with it, for the burial of strangers in the rock-cut tombs; and it was called the Field of Blood, Akeldama.

121. “JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

THEY took away the scarlet robe. They clothed him in his own garments. They led him forth to die. Worn out by his sweat of blood, by hunger and thirst, by sleeplessness, by the cold of the night, by the cruel scourging, he stood now well-nigh swooning in the fierce heat of noon. The soldiers laid hold on a man coming in from the country, one Simon of Cyrene, and compelled him to carry the beams of the cross. There were also two others, evil-doers, led out with him to death.

So, amid the Roman spears, they went through the Street Dolorous. A great throng of people followed, of women too. No woman was there at any time but loved him, and these were wailing and lamenting for him. Jesus turned to them and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me; but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the days are coming when it shall be said, ‘Blessed are the childless, and happy the breasts to which no small mouths cling,’ and the people shall cry out to the mountains ‘Fall on us’ and to the hills, ‘Bury us.’”

They came to the place called Golgotha, because the grey rock was weathered to the semblance of a skull. They gave him wine mingled with myrrh to drowse his senses, but he would not drink of it. There

they crucified him, and with him the evil-doers, one on either side. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Upon the cross was fixed the inscription in Greek and Latin and Hebrew which Pilate wrote: "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews." The chief priests had protested, "Nay, write not 'The King of the Jews,' but 'He said I am King of the Jews,'" and Pilate had answered brusquely, "What I have written I have written."

From the city wall, from the walls of the temple courts, from the house-roofs, from among the tents on the hill-sides the Jews of the city and the pilgrims who had come up from the ends of Israel gazed in thousands, in tens of thousands, at the crosses on Golgotha.

The soldiers who had crucified him took his garments (for naked he came into the world, and naked he left it), and divided them in four shares among themselves. As they looked at his tunic woven all in one without seam, "Do not rend it," they said; "let us draw for it." So was fulfilled that scripture which says,

"My garments they parted among them,
And lots on my vesture they cast."

And then they sat down and watched him.

The rulers of the people passed by, deriding him, "He saved others; himself he cannot save." The chief priests and scribes wagged their beards, "Let the Christ, King of Israel, come down from the cross; then we shall see and believe"; "He trusted in God; let God deliver him now, for he said 'I am His Son.'"

One of the evil-doers, crucified with him, cried jeeringly, "Art thou not Messiah? Save thyself and us"; but the other said, "Hast thou no fear of God, seeing his doom is thine own? We suffer justly for our crimes, but he has done no wrong." And he said to Jesus, "Remember me when thou art come into thy kingdom." Jesus answered, "Of a truth I tell thee, this day thou shalt be with me in paradise."

And watching afar off were many women, who had followed and ministered to him in Galilee; but beside his cross stood his mother and his mother's sister Salome and Mary the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene. Seeing near him his mother and the disciple he loved, Jesus said to her, “ Woman, behold thy son,” and to the disciple, “ Behold thy mother.” From that hour that disciple took her to his home.

Then in the high heavens the sun was darkened, and over all the land there was darkness until the ninth hour; and at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, “ Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani—My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me ? ” Some of the Jews standing nigh said, “ Hark, he is calling Elijah ! ” One ran, and filling a sponge with the wine and myrrh, raised it on a stalk of hyssop to his lips; but the rest said, “ Let be ! let us see if Elijah will come to deliver him.” With a great cry Jesus gave up the ghost.

Then was the veil of the temple rent from top to bottom. The earth quaked; rocks were split; stones were rolled away from the graves. The centurion on guard said, “ Truly this was an innocent man, and the gods are ill-pleased.” In the temple court they began to slay the lambs for the passover.

The darkness had passed away; the three crosses on the hill of the skull stood out ghastly over-against the westering sun; the sabbath was approaching, and the Jews besought Pilate to have the legs of the crucified broken and the bodies taken down before the holy day began. The soldiers therefore broke the limbs of the criminals. Jesus, they saw, was already dead; they left him untouched, but one of them thrust a spear into his side, and blood and water gushed from the wound. Thus were those prophecies fulfilled—“ A bone of him shall not be broken,” and “ They shall look on him whom they pierced.”

Then Joseph of Arimathæa, a counsellor, great-hearted and upright, who secretly believed in Jesus,

came to Pilate and begged that he might take away his body. Pilate gave him leave. And Nicodemus, who had come to Jesus by night, brought myrrh and aloes; and they swathed the body with the spices in fine linen. In the last light of the evening they laid him in a new tomb which Joseph had hewn out of the rock in a garden near Golgotha. And Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, sitting over-against the tomb, saw the place where he was laid.

The great paschal moon shone over Jerusalem. The palaces of the priests, the houses crowded in the narrow streets, the camps in the valleys, the tents on the hill-sides were all alive with lights.

It was the feast of the passover. The wine-cup was blessed, and passed from hand to hand. In the holy city and all round the circuit of the hills there rose the sound of singing. The bitter herbs were eaten. Tens of thousands of children asked the same question, and in reply tens of thousands of voices were telling at the same moment the story of the bondage and the deliverance out of Egypt.

As it grew late the night was again filled with the sound of song. It was the song which began—

“Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us,
But unto Thy name give glory;”

and this was the end of it—

“Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good,
For His pity endures for ever.”

And in the moonlit garden Jesus lay cold in his tomb.

122. THE RISEN LORD.

WHEN morning was come, the priests and Pharisees remembered the words of Jesus that he would arise, and prayed Pilate to have a guard set over the tomb

till the third day, "lest," they said, "his disciples, coming by night, should steal him away and say to the people, 'He is arisen from the dead.' That last imposture would be worse than the first." "You have a guard," said Pilate, "do as you wish." So they sealed the great stone rolled against the entrance, and set a watch over the tomb.

When the sabbath was over, and the dawn was reddening towards the first day of the week, there came forth from the open tombs in the gardens and the ravines and on the rocky terraces of the hills many bodies of the holy ones who slept; for Jesus, mindful of his dead of old time, had descended into Sheol, the hidden place. And these went up into the holy city, and appeared to many people.

And while it was still very early, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome and Joanna came with spices and perfumes to the sepulchre. "Who," they said, "will roll us away the stone?"—for it was very great. As they spoke the earth shook, and an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. His face was like lightning; his raiment white as snow. In their fear of him the guards were as dead men. "Be not you affrighted," he said to the women. "You seek Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he is arisen. See where they laid him. Hasten now, and tell his disciples that he goes before you into Galilee, as he said." They ran, trembling with fear and with a great joy.

Into the city fled the guards. They told the chief priests all they had seen; but the priests bribed them with large money to say, "His disciples came by night and stole his body, for we had fallen asleep."

And coming to Simon Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved, Mary Magdalene said, "They have taken away the Lord, and we do not know where they have laid him." Then these two disciples hastened to the place; they ran, but John outstripped Peter. Coming first to the tomb, he saw the grave-clothes lying, but

did not enter. But Simon Peter went in, breathing hard. There on the stone lay the swathings of fine linen, and a little way apart from these, the head-cloth folded turban-wise. They lay in the shape in which Jesus had lain the moment before he arose from them; and his rising had been intangible as the rising of light through darkness. Then John too entered, and he saw, and believed.

The disciples went back into the city, but Mary Magdalene, who had followed them, sat at the sepulchre weeping. Bending down, she looked and saw in the tomb two angels clothed in white, who sat, one at the head and one at the feet, where Jesus had lain. They said to her, "Why art thou weeping?" "They have taken away my Lord," she answered, "and I know not where they have laid him." With that she turned round, and saw Jesus near her, but she knew not that it was he. "Why art thou weeping, woman?" he said to her; "Whom dost thou seek?" "Sir," she answered, thinking him to be the gardener, "if it be thou who hast removed him, tell me where he lies and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She sprang towards him with a glad cry, "Rabboni! Master!" "Do not touch me," he said, "for I am not yet ascended to my Father. But go to my brethren and tell them that I am ascending to my Father and their Father, to my God and their God."

But to the other disciples all that the women said seemed tales of illusion.

That day two of their company set out for Emmaus village, seven miles it might be from Jerusalem. As they fared by rugged tracks over the spring-flushed hills, conversing of all these things which had happened, Jesus overtook them and walked by their side; but their eyes were withheld from knowing him. "Of what are you speaking as you go," he asked them, "that you look sad?" One of them, Cleopas, replied, "Art thou a stranger, all alone in Jerusalem, that thou dost not know the things which have happened these

last days?" "What things?" he said. And they told him how Jesus the mighty prophet had been done to death.

"We were in hope," said they, "that it was he who should deliver Israel; but for all that, this is the third day since these things were done. And yet there have been happenings which leave us amazed. For certain women of our company, going early to the sepulchre and not finding him, returned telling us they had seen a vision of angels who say he is alive. And some of our men went and saw that these things were so; but him they did not see." Jesus said to them, "O foolish men, slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have said. Was there not need that the Christ should suffer thus and enter into his glory?" And he explained to them all that had been written concerning himself.

As they came near the village on its green knoll, he seemed to be going on further, but they constrained him to abide with them, for the day was far spent. When they sat down to eat, he took bread, and asking a blessing on it, he broke it. Their eyes were opened. They knew him as he vanished from their sight.

When they could speak, they said one to the other, "Were not our hearts burning while he talked with us on the way?" Instantly they hastened back over the moonlit hills to Jerusalem. They found the disciples sitting together, with the doors barred for fear of the Jews. They told them all that had happened to them.

They were still speaking, when lo! himself was there in the midst of them, saying, "Peace be with you!" They stood trembling with fear, thinking they saw a spirit; but he said, "Why are you perturbed, and why do such thoughts arise in you? See my hands and my feet; touch me and see. A spirit has not flesh and bone, as you see me have." And as still, despite their joy, they could not believe, he asked them, "Have you here any meat?" They gave him a portion of broiled fish and honeycomb, and he ate before their eyes.

But Thomas Didymus was not with them, and when the disciples told him they had seen the Lord, he answered, "If I do not see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger in the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." Eight days afterwards, when Thomas was with them and the doors were made, Jesus stood in the midst of them. He said to Thomas, "Reach thy finger hither and see my hands; reach out thy hand too and put it into my side, and be not unbelieving but believing." Thomas answered, "My Lord and my God!" "Because thou didst see me thou hast believed," Jesus said to him; "happy they who did not see and did believe."

123. "GO INTO ALL THE WORLD."

It was morning on the sea of Galilee. The bright mists drifted away, and on the sparkling water a fisher-ship was making the land. Simon Peter was in it, and with him Thomas Didymus, Nathanael of Cana, the two sons of Zebedee and two other disciples; but all that night it had been labour lost, for they had taken nothing.

Jesus stood on the shore, but they did not know that it was he. He called to them, "Lads, have you anything to eat?" They answered, "No." "Cast the net to starboard," he said, "and you will find." They did so, and the net was filled with such a shoal that they could not draw it. Then, for an instant, the disciple whom Jesus loved saw again in the mind's eye the heave of the sea and the shimmering ruffle of that first miraculous haul, and he said to Peter, "It is the Lord!"

In the twinkling of an eye Simon had belted his fisher's coat about him and plunged into the sea. The others came in the boat, dragging the net with its straining catch. Lo! on the white sand there was a fire of charcoal, and fish broiling on it, and bread. Jesus

said to them, “Bring of the fish you have caught”; and Simon Peter ran and drew in the net full of great fishes, a hundred and fifty and three. Then Jesus said, “Come and eat,” and he took of the bread and the fish, and shared it amongst them. But no one dared ask him any questions.

When they had broken their fast, he said to Peter, “Simon son of Jona, dost thou love me more than these?” “Ay, Lord,” he answered, “thou knowest I love thee”; and Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.” Again he asked him, “Dost thou love me?” and again Peter answered, “Thou knowest I love thee”; and Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.” Yet a third time he asked him; and Peter, remembering how he had thrice denied him, was pained at heart and said, “Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.” Jesus replied, “Feed my sheep”; and gazing at him he said, “In truth, in truth I tell thee, when thou wast younger thou didst gird thee and go thine own way; but when thou art come to be old, thou shalt lift up thy hands, and another shall gird thee and lead thee whither thou would’st not”—foreshadowing thus by what death Peter should glorify God. “Follow me.”

And turning as he followed Jesus, Peter said, “And this man, Lord”—for he saw that the disciple beloved was also following—“what shall happen to him?” Jesus answered, “If I choose that he should tarry till I come, what does that concern thee? Do thou follow me.” And Peter followed. But because of that saying it was rumoured among the brethren that this disciple would not die, but it was not that that Jesus said.

After these things the disciples went up into a mountain in Galilee, as he told them. And Jesus came to them and said, “Go you into all the world, teach all nations, and preach the gospel to every creature, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. I am with you all the days until the end of the world.”

Once again he came to them. It was in Jerusalem, and he bade them depart not from the city until they had received power of the Holy Spirit to bear witness of him to the uttermost parts of the earth. Over Olivet he brought them out with him, even as far as the palms of Bethany. There he blessed them; and while they were still gazing upon him, he was taken up into heaven and a cloud received him out of their sight.

124. THE TONGUES OF FIRE.

PAUSING many a time to look back towards Bethany and into the cloudless heavens, they came down from the Mount of Olives like people in a dream. For forty days he that was dead was seen of them to be alive by many proofs infallible. They were now at the beginning of a new life. Returning to Jerusalem, they ascended to the upper room where they were used to meet. There were Peter, John and James, Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James son of Alpheus, Simon the Zealot, and Jude son of James; and all of them continued in prayer, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus and his brothers.

In those days, after prayer to Him "who knows the hearts of all," the place from which Judas had fallen was given by lot to one who could bear witness with them to the resurrection of the Lord; for from the baptism in Jordan he had been of their company all the time the Lord Jesus had gone in and out among them, even to the day when he was taken up into heaven. The lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered among the apostles.

Now came the fiftieth day that the Lord was risen. It was also the day of thanksgiving for the harvest of the corn, the joyful "feast of weeks"; and all the circuit of the city was thronged with devout Jews from all parts of the land and the far countries of the dispersion.

But the disciples of Jesus were all gathered to-

gether, and the number of their company was about one hundred and twenty souls. Suddenly there was a sound out of heaven as of an infinite gale carried along. It filled the whole house in which they were sitting; and in the midst of that great sound there appeared to them as it were fire cloven into tongues, which rested upon each one of them. And they all were filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in strange tongues just as the Spirit gave them utterance.

As that mighty sound rumbled over Jerusalem a multitude came hastening together. Among them were Jews from all countries—children of the exile from Parthia and Media and Elam; pilgrims from the Land between the Rivers, from the provinces of Lesser Asia, from Egypt and the African shores westward to Cyrene; sojourners from Rome, both Jews and proselytes; islanders from Crete and merchants from Arabia; and they stood astounded to hear those rude men of Galilee speaking in the tongues of their distant homes. Some said, “What may this mean?” Others scoffed, “These men are full of sweet wine.”

But Peter, standing forth with the eleven, answered them in a ringing voice, “Nay, not so! But this is what was foretold by the prophet Joel—

‘ In the latter days it shall be, said God,
That I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.
And your sons and daughters shall prophesy;
Your young men shall see visions,
And your old men shall dream dreams.’

Men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, to whom God bore witness by the miracles and wonders and signs which He wrought through him, as you yourselves know; this Jesus, delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you took, by lawless hands you crucified, you slew. Him has God raised up, loosing him from the toils of death, for it was not possible that he should be held by death. Now by the right hand of God exalted, he has received from the

Father the Holy Spirit which was promised, and has thus shed it forth, as you see and hear. Let then the whole house of Israel know assuredly that this same Jesus whom you crucified God has made both Lord and Christ."

His words pierced them to the heart. "Brothermen," they said to the apostles, "what shall we do?" Peter answered, "Repent, and be you baptized every one in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, for all those who are abroad, as many as the Lord our God shall call."

With many other words he conjured them; and that day there were added to the number of the disciples about three thousand souls. Many of these when they departed to their homes carried back with them into distant lands the story of these wonders and of the teaching of the apostles.

125. AT THE BEAUTIFUL GATE.

ON a day at the third hour after noon Peter and John went up to the temple, for it was the hour of prayer. At the Beautiful Gate lay a man, who asked alms of those who passed into the house of the Lord. Forty years old he was and upward, and from his birth he had been a cripple.

As he stretched out his hand towards them, Peter and John fixed their eyes upon him, and Peter said, "Look thou at us." The man looked up at them, in expectation of some good gift. Then said Peter to him, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have I give thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise and walk!"

He took him by the hand, and raised him up. At his touch the cripple felt power in his feet; he sprang up and stood, and went with them into the temple, walking and leaping and praising God.

All knew that it was the cripple who begged at the Beautiful Gate, and they crowded round the apostles as they entered Solomon's portico, with the cripple holding them.

Then Peter, turning to the people, said, "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Why do you look so earnestly at us as though we by our own power and holiness, had made this man walk?" Then he spoke to them of him whose name, through faith in his name, had given this man the use of his feet; of the Holy One whom they had rejected for a murderer; of the Prince of life, whom they had done to death—but God had raised him up from the dead.

"What you did, brethren," he said, "I know you did through ignorance, as your rulers did also. Repent therefore that your sins may be blotted out"; and having recalled what the prophets had foretold of the Lord Jesus, "You," he said, "are the children of the prophets and of the covenant. To you first, when He had raised up His Son Jesus, God sent him to bless you." He was still speaking when the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees laid hands upon them. But the words of Peter had been words of power. Of those who listened to them, about five thousand there were who believed.

That night they were kept in ward. On the morrow they were brought before Annas the high-priest, Caiaphas, and their kinsmen. In answer to their questioning Peter boldly declared, "Be it known to you, and to all Israel, that it is by the name of Jesus whom you crucified, and whom God raised from the dead, that this cripple stands here before you whole."

The priests forbade them to teach or to speak at all in the name of Jesus, but Peter and John answered, "Do you judge whether in the sight of God it be right to obey you rather than God; for of the things we have seen and heard we cannot but speak." When the priests had again threatened them they set them free,

for they did not see how to punish them through fear of the people.

126. GAMALIEL'S WARNING.

ONE heart and one soul bound the multitude of believers together, and they made under many roofs one household wherein no one said "This is mine," but all things were in common. For those who had houses and land sold them and brought the price to the apostles, so that there should not be any one in need at any time.

But there was a man named Ananias, who came to the apostles and said, "We have sold a field, and here I bring you the price"; but the money which he laid at their feet was but part of the price, for he and Sapphira his wife had withheld the rest. Peter said to him, "Ananias, why has Satan so filled thy heart that thou liest to the Holy Spirit and hast withheld part of the price of the land? It was thine to keep or to sell, and when it was sold the price was still thy own. It is not to men thou hast lied, but to God."

As he heard the words, Ananias fell down and expired. The young men shrouded him for the grave and bore him to his burial. When about three hours had gone by, his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. Peter said to her, "Tell me, was it for so much that you sold the field?" "Yes," she said, "it was for so much." Peter said to her, "How have you been of one mind to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Hark, the feet of those who buried thy husband are at the door, and they shall carry thee out."

Therewith Sapphira fell down at the feet of the apostle and expired. The young men came in and found her dead, and carried her out to her grave beside her husband.

A great awe fell upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.

Day by day the apostles frequented the temple, and taught in Solomon's portico; from house to house they went, breaking bread and eating in gladness and simplicity of heart. The people held them in honour and kindness; and believers, both men and women, were added more and more to the church.

Many were the wonders wrought by the apostles. The sick were laid in the streets on mats and couches, so that at least the shadow of Peter should fall upon them as he went by; and even from the cities around a multitude brought in those suffering from disease and afflicted with unclean spirits. All these were healed.

But the high-priest and the Sadducees came flaming with wrath, and cast the apostles into the common prison. Early on the next day they called together the great council and bade the prisoners be brought before them. Speedily the officers returned with the tidings—the prison was shut and barred, the warders were at the doors, but the prisoners had vanished. Then came a messenger to the council, "The men you laid in ward are here in the temple, teaching the people." So it was; for in the dark before dawn the angel of the Lord had opened the prison doors, and brought them forth to speak in the temple all the words of this life beyond death.

Then the captain and the officers went and brought them, but they used no violence, for they feared the people might stone them. When the apostles stood before the council the high-priest said to them, "Did not we strictly forbid you to speak at all in this name? Yet see how you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and are stirring up the people to avenge upon us this man's blood."

"We must obey God rather than man," Peter answered. "The God of our fathers has raised up Jesus, whom you slew, as Prince and Saviour to give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. To these

things are we witnesses, even as is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."

Enraged by these words, the Sadducees would fain have slain them, but Gamaliel, a Pharisee and a rabbi honoured by the people, warned the council to deal heedfully with these men. "If this work," he said, "be of men it will come to nothing; but if it be of God you cannot overthrow it, and beware lest it be against God that you fight."

This gave them pause; and having beaten the apostles with rods and forbidden them to speak in Jesus his name, they released them. Rejoicing they went forth that they were found worthy to suffer outrage for his name; and day by day, in the temple and in every house, they were teaching and preaching Christ Jesus continually.

So, many days went by, and the church was largely increased, and among the priests a great number became obedient to the faith.

127. THE MARTYRDOM OF STEPHEN.

Now Stephen and Philip were of the seven appointed to minister to the needs of the Hellenist women, widows of the Greek-speaking Jews. And Stephen, a man full of faith and of the power of the Holy Spirit, wrought great wonders among the people. But certain Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria and Lesser Asia rose in dispute against him in the synagogue, and when they could not resist the wisdom of the Spirit on his lips, they brought him before the great council, and false witnesses charged him: "We have heard him say, 'Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this holy place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us.'"

"Are these things so?" asked the high-priest. Stephen stood forth to answer, and all that sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel as he showed them that from the beginning they had been a stiff-necked people, ever resisting the Holy



The Stoning of Stephen.

Spirit. "Which of the prophets," he cried, "have not your fathers persecuted? And they slew those who foretold the coming of the Just One, whom now you have betrayed and murdered—you who have received the law through the hands of angels, yet have not kept it."

As they listened they were furious at heart, and ground their teeth against him; but Stephen, looking in rapture, saw the glory of God and said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God."

They uttered wild cries, they stopped their ears, they ran in upon him all together; they flung him out of the city and stoned him. The witnesses, who cast the first stones, laid their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning him Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then, struggling to his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." And with those words he fell asleep.

That same day there broke out a fierce persecution of the church of Jerusalem. All fled, except the apostles, and were scattered over the moors and among the villages of Judæa and Samaria. But devout men laid Stephen in his grave, and mourned for him with loud lamentation.

As for Saul, who thought well of the killing of Stephen, he ravaged the church, bursting into houses, dragging out men and women and casting them into prison. But the brethren scattered abroad went from place to place, proclaiming the good tidings of the word.

Philip went down into Samaria city and preached there the tidings of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus. The crowds, when they heard of his miracles, and saw how evil spirits were cast out shrieking and many paralysed and lame were healed, listened to his word, believed with great joy, and were baptized, men and women.

There was in that city a man named Simon, an enchanter, who laid claim to some mysterious greatness and had long bewitched the people of Samaria with his sorceries. He too was baptized, and keeping with Philip, beheld with amazement the wonders that were wrought.

Then came Peter and John from Jerusalem; and praying for the newly baptized, they laid their hands upon them, and straightway these Samaritans received the Holy Spirit. When Simon saw the might of this laying on of the hands, he brought money to the apostles. "Give me too this power," he said, "that he on whom I lay my hands shall receive the Holy Spirit." "Perish thy money with thee!" Peter answered, "because thou hast thought that the gift of God might be had for money. Neither part nor lot hast thou in this matter, for thy heart is not right in God's eyes. Pray to the Lord that thy wicked thought may if possible be forgiven thee." "Do thou pray thyself to the Lord for me," said Simon, "that there befall me nothing of what thou hast said."

Thereafter they preached the gospel in the villages of Samaria. But an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Arise, and go into the South Country by the way from Jerusalem to Gaza through the desert." And behold, on the desert track came with his guards and slaves an Ethiop, a eunuch, lord over the treasures of Candace, queen of the Ethiops, where the Nile rolls between the cataracts round the land of Cush. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning, and as he sat in his chariot he was reading aloud from a roll of Isaiah the prophet.

The Spirit said to Philip, "Go close and keep with the chariot." Philip ran towards the reader and said to him, "Dost thou understand what thou art reading?" "Why, how can I," he answered, "if there be not some one to guide me?" and he prayed him to come and sit beside him.

Now the scripture which he read was this—

“He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like as a lamb before the shearer is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. His generation who shall describe? For his life was cut off from the land of the living.”

“Of whom does the prophet speak thus?” the Ethiop asked, “Of himself, or of another?” Then Philip, beginning with this scripture, set before him the good tidings of Jesus. As they fared onward they came to water. “See,” said the Ethiop, “here is water. What hinders that I should be baptized?” “If thou dost believe with all thy heart,” said Philip, “thou mayest be.” “I believe,” the Ethiop answered, “that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”

He stopped the chariot. They went down into the water together, and Philip baptized him. When they came out of the water the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, and the Ethiop saw him no more. Joyfully the Ethiop went on his way, and Philip found himself at Azotus on the shore. Thence, preaching in all the cities between the Great Sea and the oak-forests of Sharon, Philip journeyed northward and came to Cæsarea.

128. THE VISION OF SAUL.

MEANWHILE Saul, whose very breath was menace and slaughter of the Lord's disciples, obtained from the high-priest letters for the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found there any of the new teaching, men or women, he might carry them in bonds to Jerusalem.

At noontide, as he drew nigh the city of streams and green woods, suddenly a light from heaven dazzled around him. He fell to the earth, and heard a voice which said, “Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute me?” “Who art thou, Lord?” he answered. The Lord said, “I am Jesus whom thou dost persecute.” Then Saul beheld the Lord Jesus and said, “What shall I do,

Lord?" "Arise, and go into the city," the Lord said, "and there thou shalt learn what thou must do."

The men who were riding with him stood speechless, for they too had fallen in that splendour of light, had heard voices, but had seen no man, and they were afraid. Saul arose from the earth, but when he opened his eyes all was dark. They took him by the hand, and led him into Damascus; and for three days he was sightless, and he neither ate nor drank.

Then in a vision the Lord came to Anánias, a disciple in Damascus, and said to him, "Go into the street called Straight, and in the house of Judas ask for one Saul of Tarsus. For he is praying; and he has seen in vision a man named Ananias, who came and laid his hands upon him so that he should recover his sight." "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard from many how much evil thy saints in Jerusalem have suffered from this man; and here he has power from the chief priests to lay in bonds all those who call upon thy name." The Lord said, "Nay, go; for this man is a chosen vessel to carry my name before the nations and the kings and the people of Israel."

Then Ananias went into the house, and he laid his hands upon Saul, saying, "Saul, brother, the Lord Jesus who appeared to thee on the way when thou wast coming has sent me to thee that thou mayest receive thy sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

In an instant scales, as it were, fell from his eyes, and he saw again; and he arose and was baptized, and when he had eaten his strength came back to him. He began at once to preach in the synagogue that Jesus was the Son of God, and the Jews of Damascus, who knew of his old zeal, were amazed to hear him.

When time had gone by, they plotted to take his life, and watched the gates by night and day; but the disciples lowered him in a basket, under cloud of night, from a house on the wall. Coming to Jerusalem, he would fain have joined the disciples, but they went in dread of him, until Barnabas brought him to Peter and

James the brother of the Lord, and told them how Saul had beheld the Lord Jesus, who spoke to him, and how in Damascus he had preached boldly in his name.

Now Barnabas, "son of consolation," was the surname the apostles gave to Joses the Levite of Cyprus. He was the nephew of Mary of Jerusalem, and cousin of her son John Mark, who was thought to be the young man that fled, leaving his linen covering, on the night of treachery.

And Saul was in daily fellowship with the disciples, and disputed with the Greek Jews who would hear of no Christ for the heathen peoples; but when these plotted against his life the brethren sent him to Tarsus.

In the churches in Judæa, Samaria and Galilee there now came a time of rest and of comfort in the Holy Spirit, and they increased greatly.

129. TABITHA AND CORNELIUS.

AMONG the disciples in Joppa there was a woman named Tabitha (which in Greek is Dorcas), who was ever giving in gracious pity to the poor. She fell sick, and died, and they laid her in an upper room ready for the grave. But when the disciples heard that Peter was near them, at Lydda, they sent two men praying him to come to them quickly.

When he was come they took him into the upper-room; and the widows came about him, weeping and showing him the garments and the little clothes Dorcas had made while she was with them. Peter sent every one out of the room, and kneeling down, he prayed. Then he turned him to the dead where she lay and said, "Tabitha, arise!" She opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. He gave her his hand and raised her to her feet; and calling the saints and the widows he gave her to them alive.

This was known all through Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.

In the city of Cæsarea there was a centurion of the Italian cohort named Cornelius. Devout, charitable, constant in prayer, he was a man who feared God, as did all his house. On a day, between noon and sunset, he saw in a vision clearly an angel who came to him and said, "Cornelius, thy prayers and thy alms have ascended to God, and He hath them in memory. Send now men to Joppa to bring to thee Simon surnamed Peter, and he will tell thee what to do. He is lodged with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea."

Cornelius sent to Joppa two of his bondmen and a godly soldier of his household. They slept that night by the way, and on the morrow as they drew near the city it was noon on the blue waters and the drowsy shore, and Peter went up to the house-top to pray. He became very hungry and was craving to eat. While they were making food ready he fell into a trance.

In his trance he sees the heavens open. What seems a great web, hung by four corners, is let down to the earth, and in it are all the four-footed creatures of the world, beasts of the wilds, creeping things and birds of the air.

A voice said to him, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat." "By no means, Lord," Peter answered; "for never have I eaten any thing that was common or unclean." The voice replied, "What God has made clean, do not thou call common."

Three times did this happen; then the great web was drawn up into the heavens. As Peter mused and doubted what the vision meant, came the three men asking for him at the house by the sea; and the Spirit said to him, "Go down, for here are three men seeking thee. And trust thyself to them, for they are of my sending." Peter went down to them. When they had told him of Cornelius and the angel he entertained them that night. Then he departed with them and certain of the brethren, and they came to Cæsarea.

Cornelius had invited his kinsmen and close friends for his coming, [and as Peter entered the house he

met him and cast himself at his feet. But Peter raised him, saying, "Nay, upon thy feet! I too am a man"; and conversing with him he went in, and found many people there.

"You know," he said, "it is forbidden to a Jew to make friends of strangers or to enter their homes, but God has taught me to call not any man common or unclean. Wherefore I came without scruple as soon as thou didst send for me." "Thou hast done well to come," said Cornelius; and having told him of the man who appeared to him in shining raiment, "Now," he added, "all we are here before God to receive whatsoever the Lord has commanded thee to tell us."

"Of a truth," said Peter, "I do perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he who fears Him and does righteously is accepted with Him. To the children of Israel He sent the word, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. You know what happened throughout Judæa after the baptism which John preached—how Jesus was anointed with the power of the Holy Spirit, and went from place to place doing good and healing all who were under the oppression of Satan; for God was with him. We are witnesses of all he did in Judæa and in Jerusalem, where the Jews slew him and hanged him on the tree. God raised him up on the third day and gave him to be seen, not by all people but by chosen witnesses, indeed by us, who ate and drank with him after he had risen from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to bear witness that God ordained him to be the judge of the living and of the dead."

While Peter was speaking the Holy Spirit descended upon all in that gathering who believed. The Jewish brethren who accompanied Peter heard these aliens speaking with the gift of tongues and glorifying God, and a marvellous thing it seemed to them that the Holy Spirit should be shed upon heathen men and women.

But Peter said, "Who can forbid the water of baptism to these who have received the Holy Spirit

as well as we?" And he commanded that they should be baptized in the name of the Lord.

130. THE DELIVERANCE OF PETER.

THE brethren who had been scattered on the death of Stephen wandered far with the good tidings; and among them certain men of Cyrene and Cyprus preached to the Greek-speaking Jews of Antioch. Many believed, and Barnabas was sent to them. He brought Saul from Tarsus, and for a year they worked together in the splendid city of marble-pillared streets. Then a great famine came upon the whole Roman world in the days of Claudius, and Barnabas and Paul brought the succour of the church in Antioch to the brethren in Judæa.

In these days Herod Agrippa, grandson of the murderer of the children, began to harass the church. James the brother of John he beheaded; and when he saw that the Jews were pleased, he laid hands on Peter, meaning to slay him after the passover. Peter lay in prison guarded by soldiers in four bands of four; and the church prayed without ceasing.

The feast closed with the setting of the sun. That night Peter slept chained to two of his guards; two others watched before the prison gates. And behold, an angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shone within the prison. Striking Peter on the side, the angel awoke him and said, "Rise quickly." The chains fell from Peter's hands. "Gird thyself, and put on thy sandals"; and he did so. "Wrap thee in thy cloak, and follow me."

Peter went forth and followed him, not knowing that what the angel did was real, and being of a mind that it was a vision. They passed through the first ward, then the second, and came to the iron gate which leads into the city. It opened of itself before them. They passed out and went along one street.

Suddenly the angel was gone; and Peter, coming to

himself, said, "Now I see very surely that the Lord did send an angel, and has delivered me from Herod and all that the people of the Jews were awaiting."

When he had considered, he turned his steps to the house of Mary the mother of John Mark, where many were gathered together in prayer. He knocked at the porch door, and a maid named Rhoda came to answer. She knew Peter's voice, and in her gladness, instead of opening, she ran in to tell how Peter was standing at the door. "Thou art mad," they said; but she persisted that it was so. "It is his angel," they then said, "coming in his guise." All the while Peter was knocking; and when they opened the door and saw him they were amazed.

He made a sign for silence; and having related how the Lord had delivered him, he bade them tell James and the brethren, and departed to another place.

When it was morning the guards were in dismay at his disappearance. Herod sought for him in vain, and when he had questioned the guards, he ordered them to be put to death.

Herod went down to Cæsarea and abode there. He was greatly incensed against the Tyrians and Sidonians, but they sent him envoys who prayed him to grant them peace. On a fixed day he came forth in a wonderful robe of silver and addressed them before the people from his high seat in the amphitheatre. As he stood speaking in a glitter of light, the people cried aloud, "The voice of a god, not of a man!"

Instantly the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory. He died, eaten up by worms.

131. BY SEA AND LAND.

TAKING John Mark with them Barnabas and Saul returned to Antioch, and there the Holy Spirit called them to far wayfaring. Setting sail from their port

Seleucia, they made Cyprus, preached in the synagogue of Salamis, and going westward through the isle, came to Paphos with its rose-gardens, innumerable flocks of temple-doves and its siren goddess. In that place Saul, whose name was now changed to Paul, brought Sergius Paulus the proconsul to the Lord Jesus, and cast, for a season, a shroud of darkness about Elymas, an enchanter, who would have turned him from the faith.

Taking ship from Paphos, they bore northward, watching a dreamland of pearl in the high air, and these were the snow-mountains of Pamphylia. At Perga John Mark parted from them and returned to Jerusalem. But Barnabas and Paul traversed by wild tracks the swamps and wooded gorges and icy passes of the Taurus and reached another Antioch, in Pisidia.

On the sabbath they preached the gospel in the synagogue—glad tidings to many Jews and proselytes, ay, and to the heathen who begged that on the next sabbath they might again hear that good word. On that day well-nigh the whole city flocked to hear them, but the greater number of the Jews, filled with jealousy, stoutly opposed all that Paul said. Then said Paul to them in sorrow, "Needful it was that to you first the word of God should be spoken. But you have cast it from you, and judged yourselves unworthy of everlasting life; then we turn to the heathen, for so the Lord commanded."

The heathen were overjoyed and glorified God, and the good tidings were spread abroad through all that region. But the zealot Jews excited the devout women of high station and the lords of the city, and thrust out Paul and Barnabas. These shook the dust from their feet against them and departed to Iconium; but the disciples they left were filled with the gladness of the Holy Spirit.

In Iconium too, when they had wrought wonders and converted many, the fierce spirits of the synagogue stirred up the people to stone them. They escaped

and came to Lystra. On a day as they were preaching to the heathen folk, there was a man who sat and listened eagerly. From his birth he had been a cripple, and had never walked. Paul, looking at him intently, and seeing the faith in him, called in a loud voice, "Stand up, thou, on thy feet!" and the man sprang up from the ground and walked.

With a tumult of joy the people cried out in their rude Lycaonian speech, "The gods are come down to us in forms of men"; and seeing the noble mien and close-curl'd beard of Barnabas they called him Jupiter, but Paul, the little man eloquent, they said was Mercury. The priests of Jupiter, whose temple was outside the city, garlanded oxen with flowers and led them to the gates to be sacrificed to the divine strangers.

When Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they rent their garments and ran in among the crowd. "O men," they said, "why are you doing this? We too are men of like passions with you; and we bring you good tidings, urging you to turn away from these vain images to the living God, who made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that is in them. In times past He suffered all nations to walk in their own ways; yet He did not leave Himself without proof of His goodness,

' Giving you rains from heaven, and fruitful seasons,
Filling your mouths with bread, and your hearts with gladness.' "

Yet for all his sayings, scarcely could the people be restrained from offering them sacrifices.

After a while came Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who won the crowds over, and when they had stoned Paul, dragged his body out of the city, thinking him dead. But as the disciples stood sorrowful around him Paul arose and went back into the city.

They departed to Derbe, and when they had preached to many there, they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the brethren and ordaining elders in every church. So, faring through

Pisidia, they came again to Perga, and sailed home to their own Antioch.

132. IN THE GREEK CITIES.

AFTER many days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us visit the brethren in every city in which we have preached"; but they came to such sharp words over John Mark who had left them at Perga—Barnabas wishing to have him with them, Paul wishing quite otherwise—that they parted. Barnabas sailed with Mark to Cyprus; but Paul chose for his companion Silas the prophet, who was also a Roman citizen.

They travelled through Syria and Cilicia, visited Derbe and Lystra (where Paul added the young disciple Timothy to their company), and went through Phrygia and Galatia. But the Spirit of Jesus would not suffer them to enter the province of Asia, no, nor Bithynia, and they came down to the noble city of Troas on the Ionian shore. There he met Luke, who became his "fellow-labourer" and his "beloved physician."

In a vision of the night a man of Macedonia appeared and was calling to Paul, "Come over into Macedonia and help us." "Very sure we were," wrote Luke afterwards, "that the Lord had called us thither; and casting off from Troas, we had a straight run to Samothrace, made Neapolis the day after, and thence to Philippi."

There was no synagogue there, but on the sabbath day they went out of the city and preached to the women who used to pray in a garden beside a river. The Lord opened the heart of one of them, Lydia of Thyatira, a dealer in purple drapery, and when she had been baptized, she constrained the brethren to abide with her.

Now in Philippi there was a girl possessed by a divining spirit, who brought her masters much profit by her soothsaying; and when the brethren went to the garden to prayer, she would meet and follow them,

crying out, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who show us the way of salvation." At length Paul cast the demon out of her. Her masters saw their gains were gone. Dragging Paul and Silas before the rulers, they charged them with disturbing the city with unlawful doctrines. The multitude rose up against them; the rulers rent their garments and ordered them to be scourged, and they were cast into the inner prison, with their feet racked apart in the stocks.

At midnight the prisoners heard Paul and Silas praying and singing praises to God, when suddenly the prison rocked with a great earthquake, the doors were burst open, and every captive's bonds were loosed.

The keeper, starting from his sleep and seeing the doors open, would have taken his own life, but that Paul cried out to him, "Do thyself no harm; we are all here." He called for a light, ran in trembling, and fell at their feet. Bringing them out of the inner dungeon, "Lords," he said, "what am I to do to be saved?" and that same hour, when he had washed their wounds, he and his household were baptized.

At daybreak came the rod-bearers of the rulers of Philippi to let Paul and Silas go. But Paul replied indignantly, "Publicly they have scourged us, uncondemned, Roman citizens, and cast us into prison; and now they would thrust us out underhand? No, indeed. Let them come themselves and release us."

Mightily scared were these rulers when they knew they were Romans. They came, strove to pacify them, and setting them at liberty, besought them to quit the city. And when Paul and Silas had gone to the house of Lydia and comforted the brethren they departed.

Their route lay through Amphypolis and Apollonia to Thessalonica. When they had won there some of the Jews, a multitude of godly Greeks, and many of the great ladies, the zealots of the synagogue stirred up the baser sort of the people against them. The new

The more he won to the gospel the more fiercely his teaching was opposed by the zealot Jews, and when Silas and Timothy again joined him, he shook out his robe against the unbelievers. "Your blood be on your own heads," he said; "henceforth I go to the heathen." In a vision of the night the Lord cheered and strengthened him: "Fear not; speak, and be not silent, for I am with thee, and none shall do thee harm. I have much people in this city." For a year and six months he remained there teaching the word of God.

When the angry Jews saw how he prevailed among the Corinthians, they accused him before Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia, of turning men from the worship of God according to the law. Before Paul could speak in his own defence, Gallio answered them, "If, O Jews, it were a complaint of wrong done or some wicked mischief, it were fitting that I should uphold you; but if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, see to it yourself, for I will be no judge in such matters." As the rod-bearers cleared the court, the Greeks laid hands on Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue (Crispus, his predecessor, and all his house had accepted the faith), and beat him before the judgment seat; but to this Gallio paid no heed.

When time had gone by, Paul sailed to Ephesus, and Aquila and Priscilla with him. The Jews who heard him in the synagogue would have had him tarry with them, but he, promising that if God willed he would come to them again, took ship for Cæsarea, went up to Jerusalem for the passover, and after he had greeted the church there, returned to Antioch.

Meanwhile Apollos, a Jew of Alexandria, fervent in spirit and in speech, came to Ephesus preaching the baptism of John. Aquila and Priscilla took him to their home and taught him the way of God more perfectly. The brethren gave him letters to the disciples in Achaia, and these he helped much, for he was mighty in the scriptures and refuted the Jews of Corinth out of the prophets, who showed that Jesus was the Christ.



Paul and Silas in Prison.

Then through the upper provinces Paul came again to Ephesus, as he had promised; and for three months he preached and argued in the synagogue. But when a number remained hardened in their unbelief, and spoke evil of the way of the Lord, he separated the disciples from them, and taught daily in the school of a certain Tyrannus after the scholars had been dismissed. So it was for the space of two years, and what with the multitudes at the great feasts of Diana and the coming and going of pilgrims and traders, the Jews and Greeks throughout Asia heard of the kingdom of God. And God also wrought uncommon miracles by the hands of Paul in healing diseases and casting out spirits of evil.

Now there were seven wandering Jew exorcists, sons of Sceva, chief of the priests, who made bold to command spirits in the name of Jesus; but in one man the demon answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" and springing out of the man he assailed them so fiercely that they fled naked and wounded, whereupon a great fear fell on Greeks and Jews. Many believed, and a number brought their magic books, to the value of fifty thousand silver drachmas,* and burned them in the sight of all.

No long while after this a mighty tumult was raised in Ephesus by Demetrius, a silversmith who copied the great temple of Diana in little silver shrines. Calling his artisans together, "O men," he said, "you know that it is to this craft of ours that we owe our well-being; and you see and hear how, not only in Ephesus but in almost the whole province this Paul has turned numbers away from us by saying that they are no gods which are made with hands. Thus our craft is in danger; the temple of the great goddess is in the way of being despised, and her magnificence is like to be destroyed—she whom all Asia and the world worship."

Whereat the artisans cried out in wrath, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" and in a twinkling the whole city was in an uproar. Laying hands on two of Paul's

* About £1980.

companions, men of Macedonia, the people poured into the theatre whose stone tiers lay open to the brilliant sky. Paul was eager to confront them, but his disciples prevented him, and his friends among the Asiarchs—high officers of the province—dissuaded him from risking his life.

In the noise and confusion a certain Alexander was urged forward by the Jews to declare them innocent of any share in the disturbance, but as soon as he was seen to be a Jew, the mob lifted up their voices, and for two hours the theatre rang with a wild clamour, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"

At length the secretary of the city quieted them and said, "Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is warden of the temple of the great Diana and of her image which fell from heaven? Since this is beyond dispute, you should keep quiet and do nothing rashly. These men whom you have brought hither are not guilty either of sacrilege or of blaspheming against our goddess. If Demetrius and his craftsmen be aggrieved, there are court-sessions and proconsuls; let one party sue the other. Should you have other matters for inquiry, they shall be decided in lawful meeting. Indeed we run some risk of being charged with riot for this day's tumult, for we have no cause to justify this concourse." And with that he dismissed the multitude.

So, as he himself wrote afterwards, Paul "fought with beasts at Ephesus."

134. THE PROPHECY OF THE GIRDLE.

CARE, strife, travail had been the portion of these years in Ephesus; now the city was full of danger, while, beyond these voices, there was so much to do in other lands. "God, I think," he wrote to the brethren at Corinth, "has placed us apostles in the last rank of the pageant, and we walk as it were doomed to death, a spectacle to the world, and to angels and to men. Up

to this very hour we hunger and thirst, go ill-clad, are buffeted, have no home of our own, and win our bread with the labour of our hands." Yet was he great of heart and without fear.

Calling together the disciples, he embraced them and set out for Macedonia. When he had gone through those regions exhorting and cheering the church, he came to Greece, and was there three months. In Corinth he sought to heal the rifts of disunion and to silence for ever the party cries, "I am of Paul; I of Apollos; I of Peter." Paul, as he had told them, had not been crucified for them, and had not baptized them in his name. They were all of Christ. There too his eyes turned to Rome. The thought had been long in his heart, "I must see Rome." He wrote to the brethren there and told them so; "I long to see you that we may both be comforted together by the faith which is yours and mine."

Hearing that the Jews were lying in wait for him at Corinth port as he was about to sail for Syria, he returned through Macedonia, took ship at Philippi with Luke, and found many of the brethren at Troas expecting him.

On the first day of the week they all met together to break bread. Paul, about to depart on the morrow, discoursed to them until midnight. Many lamps were burning brightly in that upper room, and sitting in the open latticed window, there was a youth named Eutychus, who drowsed and slumbered. And as Paul still discoursed, Eutychus in deep sleep fell from his place on the third floor, and was taken up dead.

Paul hastened down the outer stairway, bent over him, and holding him in his arms, said, "Do not take on; his spirit is within him." He ascended again; they broke bread, and conversed long—till daybreak; and as Paul departed, they brought Eutychus alive, and that was great comfort to them.

So in the early dawn Paul fared southward through the high oak-woods, and came towards evening to Assos,

where his ship with Luke and the others met him. Sailing through the islands, they reached Miletus. Thither the elders of the church at Ephesus came at his desire, and among other things he said to them, "Now do I go, bound by the Spirit, to Jerusalem, not knowing what shall happen to me, save this, that from city to city the Holy Spirit has given me warning that bonds and affliction await me. Yet, for my own self, I do not hold my life dear, if I can but finish my course with joy and the apostleship which I received from the Lord Jesus. And now I know that all you, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more." And he warned them of the dangers that would beset the church, commended them to God, and urged them to succour their weak and needy brethren.

Then he knelt down and prayed with them. They all wept, and clung to his neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all because of his words, "You shall see my face no more." Then they took him to his ship.

At Tyre the disciples prayed him not to go up to Jerusalem, but as they could noway move him, they and their wives and their children accompanied him out of the city, and they all knelt down and prayed on the sea shore.

At length Paul and his company reached Cæsarea. While they sojourned in the house of Philip the evangelist, there came to them Agabus, a prophet from Judæa. He took Paul's girdle, and binding therewith his own hands and then his own feet, he said, "Even thus, saith the Holy Spirit, shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this girdle, and deliver him into the hands of the pagans."

"When we heard that," wrote Luke afterwards, "both we and the brethren in that place besought Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. But Paul answered, 'What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not to be bound only, but to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus!' When he could not

be persuaded, we ceased striving and said, 'The Lord's will be done!'

135. IN THE LION'S DEN.

RIGHT joyful was the welcome which Paul received from James the brother of the Lord, the elders and all the church in Jerusalem, and eagerly they listened to all he had to tell them of God's gracious work among the nations.

It was the feast of Pentecost, and among the multitude gathered together out of all lands were Jews from Asia province who knew and hated Paul. As soon as they saw him in the temple, they lifted up their voices against him, and laid hands upon him in the midst of an excited crowd. "You men of Israel," they cried, "here is the man who preaches everywhere and to the whole world against our nation and against the law and against this temple. Ay, and he has brought Greeks in with him to profane this holy place."

The whole city rose; the people came running from all sides. They dragged Paul forth, and shut the temple gates lest its hallowed courts should be desecrated with his blood. Word was quickly taken up to the tribune in castle Antonia that Jerusalem was in a tumult. In an instant the guard had dashed down the wide stone stairway into the thick of the crowd, and rescued Paul whom they had set about killing.

At the sight of the Roman legionaries and their commander, the attack ceased, but in the midst of that mad uproar the tribune put questions in vain. Some shouted one thing, some another, and he ordered Paul to be chained to two soldiers and taken up to the castle. Clamouring "Away with him!" the mob pressed on so furiously that at the stairs the soldiers had to carry their prisoner and hedge him about with spears.

At the castle gates Paul said to the tribune, "Have I leave to say something to thee?" "Thou speakest

Greek?" replied the tribune. "Then thou art not that Egyptian who revolted a while back and led four thousand brigands into the desert?" "I am a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia," said Paul, "a citizen of no mean city. Give me leave, I pray thee, to speak to the people." "Speak," said the tribune.

Standing on the stairs, the little man eloquent raised his hand. A great silence fell upon the tumult, and he said in Hebrew, "Men, brethren and fathers, listen now to what I say in my defence"; and hearing him speak in Hebrew, the multitude were yet more still. "I am a Jew, born at Tarsus in Cilicia; but here in this city was I brought up, and taught at the feet of Gamaliel a perfect knowledge of the law of our fathers; and I was full of zeal for God, even as are all you this day. This doctrine which angers you I too harried to death, casting men and women into prisons. The high-priest and all the council of elders are my witnesses; from them indeed I had letters to the brethren at Damascus that I might bring in bonds to Jerusalem those I found there and have them punished." He told them of his journey, of that blaze of light on the Damascus road, of his vision of the Lord, his blindness, his baptism, and his return to Jerusalem; and "As I was praying in the temple," he said, "I fell into a trance and beheld the Lord, who said to me, 'Haste thee and get thee quickly gone from Jerusalem, for they will not receive thy testimony of me.' But 'Lord,' I said, 'they themselves know that I imprisoned and scourged in the synagogues those who believed in thee, and that when they shed the blood of Stephen, thy witness, I stood by, of one mind with the rest, and kept the garments of those who killed him.' Then he said to me, 'Depart, I shall send thee far from here to the heathen nations.'"

When they had heard him thus far they broke into fierce cries, "Out of the world with such a wretch! He has lived too long," tossed their garments wildly, flung handfuls of dust into the air; and amid the turmoil the tribune ordered Paul to be put to the torture of the

rod to discover the cause of the outcry against him. When the soldiers had bound him, Paul said to the centurion in charge, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?" Whereupon the centurion hastened to Lysias the tribune, who came at once and said to Paul, "Tell me, art thou a Roman?" "Yes," Paul answered. "I paid a heavy price for that right of citizenship," said the tribune, somewhat doubtfully. "But I was born to it," replied Paul.

Then Lysias, ill at ease because he had bound a Roman, freed Paul from his chains, and on the morrow summoned the chief priests and the great council, and brought down Paul, so that he might know wherein he had offended. Paul, fixing his eyes on the magnates of the great council, said, "Brother-men, until this day I have lived with a clear conscience before God." Whereupon Ananias the high-priest cried to those who stood near Paul, "Smite him on the impious mouth." They struck him, and Paul answered with flashing eyes, "God shall smite thee, thou whitened wall!" (and indeed in after days the end of Ananias was evil), "Thou art sitting to judge me according to the law, and dost thou command me to be struck against the law?" But the men about him cried out, "Dost thou revile the high-priest of God?" "I knew not, brethren, that it was the high-priest," Paul answered, "for indeed it is written, 'Speak not evil of the ruler of thy people.'"

A number in that grave audience were indignant at the violence of the high-priest, and Paul, perceiving that one part of the council were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, said in a loud voice, "Brother-men, I am a Pharisee, the son of Pharisees, and it is concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead that I am called to account." Instantly there sprang up dissension between the two parties, for the Sadducees held that there was no resurrection and no angels or spirits, while the Pharisees believed in both. The council was divided. In the noise and excitement certain scribes of the Pharisees

rose to their feet and declared, "We find no evil in this man. And if a spirit has indeed spoken to him, or an angel, let us not strive against God."

Then, lest Paul should be torn to pieces among them, Lysias sent down the soldiers to take him out of their hands, and bring him to the castle.

And as Paul slept the Lord stood by his side and said, "Take courage! Thou hast borne witness to me in Jerusalem, so shalt thou bear witness in Rome also."

On the following day his sister's son came to him in the castle with tidings of a plot against his life. Paul sent him to Lysias, who took the youth by the hand and led him aside, "What is it thou hast to tell me?" "To-morrow," he answered, "the Jews will pray thee to bring Paul down to the council that they may question him further. Do not listen to them; for forty men and more are lying in wait for him, and they have bound themselves under a curse neither to eat nor to drink till they have killed him."

It was nine of the clock, and the moon was nearly at the full, when two hundred legionaries, seventy troopers, and two hundred javelin-men marched out of castle Antonia, with Paul riding in the midst of them. North-westward they went all through the summer-night, came to Antipatris on the edge of the great forest of the west, and all danger being now past, only the seventy horsemen continued the journey to Cæsarea with their prisoner.

In a letter to Felix the governor Lysias explained the case, and Felix, on learning that Paul was from Cilicia, placed him in ward in Herod's judgment-hall. "I will hear thee," he said, "when thy accusers arrive."

136. "I APPEAL TO CÆSAR."

FIVE days later came the high-priest and the elders with a hired advocate. In reply to his charges Paul said, "It is but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem,

coming after many years with alms for my nation and offerings. I was not found in the temple disputing with any man or stirring up the people. They who began this trouble, certain Jews from Asia, should be here in thy presence, if they have aught against me. Neither in the council was any fault found in me, unless it were that I said, ‘It is concerning the resurrection of the dead that I am called to account this day.’”

Then Felix, knowing well the nature of this teaching of the disciples, reserved the charges for future hearing, and gave Paul to the keeping of a centurion with freedom to see whom he would. Once Felix and his wife Drusilla, a Jewess, sent for Paul and heard him speak, to their discomfort, of righteousness and virtue and the judgment to come; and often afterwards Felix communed with him, hoping to be bribed for his release.

So two years passed away; Porcius Festus succeeded as governor, and Felix, wishing to please the Jews, left Paul a prisoner.

Once more, after a fruitless attempt to have Paul sent up to Jerusalem and murdered by the way, the Jews reopened the old charges at Cæsarea. Festus, eager to conciliate them, said to Paul, “Wilt thou to Jerusalem, and be judged before me there, on these matters?” “I stand at Cæsar’s judgment-seat,” Paul answered. “I should be judged there. The Jews I have wronged nowise, as thou knowest well. If I have been guilty of crimes deserving death, I am not unwilling to die; but if the charges of these men are false, no one may deliver me up to them. I appeal to Cæsar.” Festus, having consulted with his advisers, replied, “Thou hast appealed to Cæsar; to Cæsar shalt thou go.”

Not many days afterwards king Agrippa, with his sister Bernice, who was also Drusilla’s, came to Cæsarea on a visit to Festus. In their talk Festus told the king of Paul and the rancour of the Jews. “When his accusers stood up,” he said, “the only charges they raised were questions of their own creed and of a certain Jesus,

managed to wear into the high shelter of Crete, and put into Fair Havens, where they lay long storm-stayed. It was now the dangerous season, and Paul warned them of the risk of going further; but the centurion paid more heed to the pilot and the shipmaster, and in a spell of sunshine and light airs, they weighed for Phœnix, a safe winter haven in the west of the island.

A few days afterwards the storm-wind Euroclydon, the Wide-washer, burst upon them out of the north-east. The ship was caught in such squalls, said Luke, that "she could not hold in the wind's eye, and we let her scud. And running under the little isle of Clauda, with much ado we hoisted our boat aboard. Then they cradled the ship with cables, and in dread of falling to leeward into the Great Quicksands on the Afric coast, lowered the sea-drag. So we drove on. In the fury of the storm they cleared the decks on the morrow, and on the third day with our own hands we flung gear and baggage overboard. For many days we saw neither sun nor star, the wild weather weighed on us, and we lost all hope of being saved."

When they had been long without food Paul went among them and said, "O men, you should have listened to me, and not left Crete. But now I tell you, Take heart. Not one man here shall perish, but we shall lose the ship. For this night gone by there stood beside me the angel of God, whose I am and whom I worship, and he said to me, 'Fear not, Paul; before Cæsar shalt thou stand, and God has given thee the lives of all these sailing with thee. So, men, courage! for I trust to God; as it has been foretold me, so will it happen. Yet we shall be cast away upon an island.'"

On the fourteenth night, as they were tossed hither and thither in Adria—whether it was smell of the good earth or booming of breakers—the seamen felt some land coming near. They cast the lead and sounded

first twenty and then fifteen fathoms; and in fear of a rocky coast, they dropped four anchors by the stern, and wished it were day. Then, eager to save themselves, they lowered the boat to set other anchors, but Paul warned the centurion, "Unless these stand by the ship, you cannot be saved." Whereupon the soldiers cut the ropes and let the boat go adrift.

In the red of the dawn Paul urged them all to eat, for they had long fared on little; and taking bread he gave thanks to God before them and began to eat. Then they plucked up heart every one—two hundred and seventy six souls were there in all, and when they had strengthened themselves with food, they fell to lightening the ship of its freight of corn.

Daylight showed them a country strange to them, but they perceived a bay with a good strand whereon they might beach the ship. Casting off the anchors, loosening the steering gear, and giving the storm sail to the wind, they made for shore. They struck on a spit of sand; the bows stuck fast, but the poop began to break up in the heavy seas. The soldiers would have slain the prisoners to make sure that none should escape, but Julius, anxious to save Paul, forbade it. Then those who could swim leaped into the sea, the rest clung to spars and pieces of the wreck, and all came safe to land.

As soon as they had looked inland they knew that the isle was Melita. The natives, who spoke a strange tongue, welcomed them, used no little kindness, and made fires for them because of the rain and the cold. Paul gathered a bundle of sticks, and as he laid them on the fire, a viper, darting from the heat, fastened on his hand. When the islanders saw the beast clinging, they said among themselves, "Without doubt this is a murderer, and though he has escaped from the sea, Justice has not suffered him to live." Paul shook the beast into the fire, but the islanders looked to see him swell or to fall dead suddenly, and when they had

watched long and he came to no harm, they said in low voices, "He is a god."

In these parts were lands belonging to Publius, the chief man on the island, who for three days entertained them courteously. At that time his father was lying ill of fever. Paul visited him, and having prayed and laid his hands on him, he raised him up restored. After this the other sufferers in the island came and were healed; and "they paid us many honours," said Luke, "and at our departure from Melita they loaded us with all that we needed."

138. "O GRAVE, WHERE IS THY VICTORY?"

THREE months later they sailed in an Alexandrian ship which had wintered in the island; on its bows shone the figures of the starry twins Castor and Pollux, ever friendly to sea-folk. Safely they came to Syracuse, to Rhegium, and at last to Puteoli, the great harbour for the east under the high woods and vine-clad slopes of Vesuvius, whose ashy top gave one to think that once, in the ancient time, it had been a burning mountain.

There they found brethren, and with them for seven days they were in peace and solace. Then they fared Romeward; and the brethren there, having heard of their coming, went out as far as Market Appian and Three Taverns to meet them. When the centurion had delivered up his prisoners to the captain of the Prætorian guard, Paul was allowed to lodge as he would, in charge of a soldier.

Three days afterwards he called together the leading men of the Jews, and told them how he came to be in Rome, "bearing, because of the hope of Israel, this chain about me." They fixed a day to hear him speak of his teaching. Many then came to his lodging, and from morning till evening he declared to them the kingdom of God, and strove from the law and the

prophets to persuade them concerning the Lord Jesus. Some believed, some did not believe. Then said Paul, “Truly did the Holy Spirit speak to our fathers by the mouth of Isaiah, ‘Go to this people and say, You shall hear with your ears, and not understand; you shall see with your eyes, and not perceive.’ Know, then, that this message of God’s salvation is sent to the heathen, and receive it will they.” The Jews departed, and there was much dispute amongst them.

Fully two years Paul dwelt in the house he had taken, receiving all who sought him, proclaiming freely and without hindrance the kingdom of God, and teaching what concerned the Lord Jesus. To the Christians of Philippi, who provided much for his support, who were the first of the churches to think of his earthly needs, he wrote joyfully, “I would have you know how the gospel has been furthered by what has befallen me. Throughout the Prætorian camp, and elsewhere in Rome, these chains I wear are binding men to Christ. They have made the brethren bold to preach the word. Ay, even from Cæsar’s household saints send you greeting.”

How he appeared at the judgment-seat, how his chains were struck off, whether he sailed east or west—to Asia, or to Spain which he had long wished to see—who can tell? It is all now like an old tale told in the lights and shadows of a winter fire. We have but glimpses of him—in Crete, where he left Titus to see to the island congregations and ordain elders; at Miletus, where he gave his “own son in the faith,” Timothy, wise counsel for the church at Ephesus; at Troas, whence he departed hurriedly, forgetting books and cloak; at Corinth, on his way to Nicopolis on the western shores of Greece. One recalls the names of the many men and women, godly and beloved, who loved him, and wonders how many of them he saw for the last time.

He was to winter at Nicopolis, and Titus was to

come to him from Crete. There, one surmises, he was arrested and sent once more in chains to Rome. Amid the deepening shadows he stands out in clear light for a moment before the end. "Be speedy, and come to me," he writes to his "own son" Timothy; "bring Mark with thee." His fellow-workers have departed to their own fields, except Demas, who "has forsaken me, for love of this world of a day. Only Luke is with me."

At his first appearance before the tribunal, no man was at his side. It was in the martyr days when the Christians were charged with the burning of Rome. "But the Lord stood with me," and "I was saved from the lions of the arena." The end, he knew, was certain. He had no fear, for to him, to be with Christ was far better. Long ago he had sung the song of the soul's triumph, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" "Now," he writes, "I am ready to be poured out, a drink-offering on the altar, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have run the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness. . . . Be speedy, come before winter."

So, whether amid the noise of drums and cymbals he was thrown to the lions, or flamed as a living torch in Nero's gardens, or was beheaded on the Ostian way, Paul the aged passes from "this present world."

Luke alone was with him. It may be that he too, the beloved physician, the staunch companion, the faithful historian, died in those days a Roman death, and thus "the rest is silence."

Here the story stops, but does not end. It was taken up in other books, it was lived in other lives. It passed through generations and centuries to our own days; it will be lived and written in other lives and through the centuries that come after us.



Paul before Agrippa.

139. “FOR EVER AND EVER.”

THERE remains but this to tell. When all these things had gone by, and when the disciples of the Lord were all departed except the beloved who leaned on his breast, and he was grown very old, many believed in that saying which, long before, had gone abroad among the brethren, that John should not die, but should abide until the coming of the Lord.

Now John came to be in the little isle of Patmos, because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. And on the Lord's day he was entranced in spirit and beheld, as it were in the mighty imagery of the clouds, a vision of the age-long battle which was raging, and was still to rage, between righteousness and iniquity, between the light of the risen Christ and the darkness of the powers of evil. But beyond the tribulation and the strife of his own day, and of all the days of time, he saw the final overthrow of sin and violence and death, and was shown the beatitude of the kingdom of God triumphant. And of these things he wrote for the comfort and assurance of God's servants :

“I saw the heaven opened, and behold ! a white horse ; and he that sat upon it was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns. He was clothed in a garment dyed in blood, and on his garment and on his thigh was a name written, ‘ King of kings and Lord of lords.’ And the armies in heaven were following him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and pure.

“And I saw an angel standing in the sun ; and he cried with a loud voice to all the winged creatures that fly in the midst of heaven, ‘ Come and gather yourselves together to the great supper of God, that you may eat the flesh of kings and of captains and of the mighty, and the flesh of horses and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, free and bond, small and great.’

“And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse and his army.

“And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse; and all the winged creatures were filled with their flesh.

“And the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are.

“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it. From before his face earth and heaven fled away, and there was no more found place for them.

“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God. And scrolls were opened; and another scroll was opened, the book of life; and the dead were judged according to their works, from what was written in the scrolls.

“And the sea did give up the dead who were in it; and death and the house of the dead did give up the dead who were in them; and they were judged every man according to his works.

“And death and the house of the dead were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming out of heaven from God.

“And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, ‘Behold the tabernacle of God with men! He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God Himself shall be with them. He will wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be death no more, neither sorrow, nor crying, nor pain any more, for the former things are passed away.’

“And there came to me one of the seven angels who had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues; and he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God and having the glory of God.

“Its light was like a stone most precious, a jasper stone, clear as crystal. It had a wall great and high, and twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and every gate was of one pearl; and the great square of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb,

In the midst of the great square and on both banks of the river grew the tree of life, which bore twelve different kinds of fruit, and yielded fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

“And there shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in the city. His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads.

“There shall be no night there; and they need no lamp, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light. And they shall reign for ever and ever.”

CENTRAL CIRCULATION
CHILDRENS ROOM

THE END

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